



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





IN CHANGE UNCHANGED.



# IN CHANGE UNCHANGED.

BY

LINDA VILLARI,

AUTHOR OF "IN THE GOLDEN SHELL," ETC., ETC.

*IN TWO VOLUMES.*

VOL. II.



London:

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1877.

*(All rights reserved.)*

251. d. 850.



# IN CHANGE UNCHANGED.



## CHAPTER I.

"Every man will be thy friend  
While thou hast wherewith to spend,"

SHAKESPEARE.

MRS. TREVELYAN drove away from the Certosa in the worst of humours at Bethune's desertion, and quite snubbed the lively Miss Smith, because that young lady had conceived a violent admiration for the handsome Mrs. Henderson.

But she could not afford to offend the Smiths : it suited her to cultivate good-natured, simple, wealthy people who had not been long enough in Florence to learn that their charming friend's reputation was not stainless. So Mrs. Trevelyan sought to repair her rudeness to the daughter by



increased amiability to the mamma, and pressingly invited them to come home with her to the villa she was occupying up the Bologna Road. She did not want them in the least, but anything was better than being alone.

"I fear you will pass a very stupid evening," she added, with a soft glance toward the young lady who had excited her temper, "for nearly every one has left Florence, and I do not hope to see more than two or three Italian friends."

"But Mr. Bethune is coming, isn't he? He said he was coming to you," put in the unlucky young lady, eagerly.

Too eagerly, Mrs. Trevelyan thought.


"If you had known Mr. Bethune as long as I have, dear Alice, you would not so readily believe in his promises," she said, with a sweet spitefulness that tinged dear Alice's cheeks with confusion.

Mrs. Trevelyan's look insinuated so much more than her words, that poor little Alice Smith felt as though she had been charged with undue admiration for the clever, amusing Mr. Bethune. The girl's discomfort soothed Mrs. Trevelyan's nerves. Her amiability returned, and she did the honours

of her borrowed abode as though it had been her own property. It was a grand old Medicean villa, with a fine cypress avenue, a steep flight of steps, bordered with statues and broken by terraces and fountains leading up through a flower garden and croquet lawn to a wide marble platform, from whence one looked down over the city and along the Arno and across the valley to the tower-crowned hill of Bellosguardo.

Its owner, a wealthy German banker, who was seldom in Florence, but disliked letting his unused villa, had never himself been able to comprehend how it was that he came to offer the loan of it to pretty Mrs. Trevelyan. It was true that he had done so, and that the offer had been eagerly accepted; but by what process he had allowed himself to be wheedled to that extent ever remained a mystery to him.

Meanwhile, the only drawback to the lady's felicity was the fact that so few acquaintances remained in Florence to be dazzled by this temporary splendour, and help to fill the reception-rooms and the delightful *loggia*, or verandah, which, wide and cool and lofty, with the aid of



a few lamps disposed among the orange trees and flowering plants, made the most fascinating of saloons in this midsummer season.


Then, too, as the siren had well calculated, her stay in this villa improved her credit with Florence shopkeepers. It was convenient that, now the great mercer in Via Tornabuoni said no more about sending in his bill; Mrs. Trevelyan had never meant to pay him before the following winter; but it was pleasanter that the man should wait cheerfully.

So she had reason to flit about gaily among her guests in a fairy-like dress of blue and white gauze, that showed off her trim little figure to perfection. There were several Italians present; a wooden-headed old general of tall, erect bearing, who talked of the pleasures of the table with the gusto of a confirmed gourmand, although in reality a man of frugally abstemious habits. In unintellectual circles in Italy it is a matter of course to devote much conversation to the flesh-pots. There were also two or three younger officers, all more or less in love with the fascinating Englishwoman so free from the *raideur* of her race; but the only

personage that concerns us is the artist, Frank Maynard, who was there by special invitation. Mrs. Trevelyan went half-way down the terrace to meet him, and was glad of Bethune's absence. More than once, when she had set her nets to entrap the young American—apparently easy prey—Bethune had spoiled her sport, sometimes by sarcastic glances that told her she was seen through, sometimes by a few jesting words to Maynard. And precisely because it would annoy Bethune, she had determined to subdue the young artist.

Clear-sighted as she generally was, her vanity prevented her from believing that Bethune's *rôle* was that of an honest guardian, not that of a jealous lover, and that his anxiety about Maynard was solely in the interest of the latter's peace.

So this evening she set to work in earnest, and before ten minutes were over, had brought Maynard to believe that he was the one person present for whose society she cared, and that she had an intense admiration for his pictures. Few men dislike homage from fair lips; and although Maynard's share of vanity was of the smallest, and he was



shielded from the full effects of the lady's wiles by a safeguard that even Bethune ignored, it is not too much to say that he thoroughly enjoyed himself, and began to think his graceful hostess a cruelly calumniated woman. Evidently, Bethune misunderstood her. Yet there were claws beneath the soft thick velvet, as he presently saw.

The conversation turned from gastronomy to art. The Smiths had heard Porta's pictures much spoken of in Rome, so thought it their duty to go to see them.

"I am told that this Signor Porta is quite a rising man, and that his paintings will soon fetch high prices in the market," slowly remarked Mr. Smith, a pompous gentleman, with too weighty a sense of personal importance to care much for general conversation. "I intend paying a visit to his studio, and it is quite on the cards that I may be induced to buy something." And Mr. Smith, having thus delivered himself, looked round upon the party with the air of one who has imparted valuable information.

"Isn't Signor Porta a dear strange delightful man?" asked Miss Smith gushingly of Maynard,

just released from willing attendance on his hostess by the entrance of new guests.


"Strange enough—yes!" replied he, in an amused tone, "but not precisely delightful in a young lady's sense of the word, for he is a bear as regards society."

"Are you talking of Porta?" asked Mrs. Trevelyan, gliding towards the Anglo-Saxon group, and leaning her arm gracefully on a marble table. "That is a tender subject, Alice dear, for I am dying to know him, and this cruel Mr. Maynard, who knows him well, has never yet brought him to see me."

And the siren's effective eyes were fixed on Maynard with an expression of tender reproach.

"I know him too well to attempt anything so impossible, much as I should like to oblige you," answered Maynard laughingly, but reddening at the same time. "Why, I have never even succeeded in persuading him to come to Bellosguardo, though he knows and likes both Miss Whitman and Mrs. Henderson."

Mrs. Trevelyan's face changed a little under her rouge, and a cattish look shone in her eyes.



"Oh, then, of course poor I could not expect to be honoured. I suppose, now," she went on with affected carelessness, "that only queer, uncouth, out-of-the-world people frequent Miss Whitman's house?"

"You are jesting, Mrs. Trevelyan," replied Maynard eagerly; "surely you know, as well as I do, that Miss Whitman goes everywhere, and receives every one she cares to know. As for that beautiful, interesting Mrs. Henderson, she has been here a very short time, and does not care for general society, though any one can see that she belongs to the very best class of Englishwomen."

"You are hardly complimentary to us, Mr. Maynard," returned Mrs. Trevelyan with a sarcastic smile, that was intended to convey volumes, "but now," and her tones were soft again, "do tell me when your own new picture will be finished. Porta is not the only painter we have in Florence, Mr. Smith," and she flashed a saucy smile upon that gentleman. "Mr. Maynard's studio is well worth visiting; and oh, he has the loveliest flowers and Japanese curiosities!"

"Ah, but my flowers and Japs don't make my


pictures come up to Porta's," said Maynard with an honest blush. "He is a great master."

"But though your friend hates society, mightn't he be persuaded to go to your studio one day, and then we ladies might drop in quite by accident, you know," urged Mrs. Trevelyan persuasively.

"Ye-es, that would be right away your best chance," replied Maynard hesitatingly, "but I don't know if Porta would ever forgive me the trick. He would very likely rush out at one door, as you ladies came in by the other."

Later in the evening, when a little dance had been improvised, Bethune made his appearance, and found Maynard and Mrs. Trevelyan at the piano playing a waltz for four hands. It did not go very well. Mrs. Trevelyan would talk and disturb her companion's bass, for Maynard was not a sufficiently practised musician to be able to carry on a flirtation at the piano without playing wrong notes, and discords vexed his ear.

The grand piano stood at the end of the *loggia*, half surrounded by tall shrubs. Bethune put his head through the leafy barrier, took in the situation at a glance, and said—





"You do not go very well together. Pray let me take your place, Mrs. Trevelyan. I know that you are longing to dance."

The lady gave a tiny shriek of affected surprise. "What an unexpected honour," she said, continuing to play with her hard, expressionless touch. "I thought that you had a pleasanter engagement for this evening."

"Perhaps you would rather I went away again. I think I must if you two go on massacring that beautiful waltz any longer."

Mrs. Trevelyan got up: she thought her slave jealous, and the thought pleased her.

"You are very rude to-night; but have your own way, you tiresome man!" she exclaimed archly, re-adjusting her bracelets on her pretty arms; and presently she was whirling round in the arms of a light-heeled young officer, whose long black moustaches continually brushed her cheeks.


The music went much better now. Maynard no longer found it difficult to keep time, yet his present companion also was talkative.

"Is it good for you to come here so much,

Frank?" asked the elder man, as he turned a page; "our fair hostess is dangerous sometimes to the young and unwary."

"She is very kind to me," replied Maynard, thumping out a chord with unnecessary vigour; "but you need not be afraid, Phil." He glanced with a smile in his companion's face. Bethune met the glance with a fixed serious look that checked the jesting remark on Maynard's lips. "You know," he went on, turning two pages instead of one, in his confusion, "we struggling artists enlarge our connection by going into the world; and though Mrs. Trevelyan does not buy pictures herself, some of her friends may. By the way, I want you to help me to give a studio party. I have half-promised to inveigle Porta into coming; these ladies want to see him. You must help me to keep him from taking fright at the sight of so many 'tempestuous petticoats.'"

Bethune raised his eyebrows. "Why not leave Porta in peace? However, I'll certainly come and be showman. Prevent your fair friends from looking at your sketches upside down. So Mrs. Trevelyan has coaxed you to give a party, has



she? I hope it may help you to sell some pictures."

Here a tray of ices put an end to music and dancing; people began to look at their watches, and soon every one had gone excepting the old General and Bethune, who had lingered on the terrace to light their cigars. To them came tripping out Mrs. Trevelyan, with a white veil becomingly thrown over her head.

"Oh, Mr. Bethune," she said with malicious gaiety, "I wanted particularly to know if you made any sketches at the Certosa after your shameful desertion of Mrs. Smith and myself."

His answer was as ready as shameless.

"Do you want to know what I did, Mrs. Trevelyan? I will tell you. I went down to the convent pharmacy, drank two glasses of Chartreuse, one of yellow and one of green, tried in vain to get the monks to sell me some of their old blue and yellow jars, smoked a couple of cigars, and walked all the way back to Florence."


The siren was silenced, not satisfied. Some instinct told her that Bethune admired her aversion, Edith Henderson; and though she still

believed him devoted to herself, she was uneasy. Yet she knew nothing of Bethune's friendly footing at Bellosguardo, and he hoped that she would never know it. Truly, evil women have terrible power, the more so that they cannot be met in fair fight.

Bethune, striding down the road to Florence, replied mechanically enough to the old General's raptures about their hostess, who was *tanto carina* (such a darling).

He was reflecting bitterly enough on the fatality that had brought Mrs. Trevelyan to Florence. Why should that light of love woman have come back like a curse across Edith Henderson's path, as though to prevent the latter from ever being able to forget the sad past? But at least Mrs. Trevelyan would soon take flight to some German baths, and probably by the autumn her fancy for Florence would have worn out.

Since the evening at the Certosa, Edith had been an anxious puzzle to her friend and hostess. She was sad, abstracted, worked harder than ever, and it plainly cost her an effort to join in general conversation and sympathize with her friend's




numerous plans and projects. She would look very worn-out sometimes in the evening, as she leaned back in an easy-chair, abstractedly caressing the Persian cat who bestowed almost as much attention upon her as upon his own mistress. Miss Whitman half believed that Edith and Bethune were drifting out of the quiet harbour of friendship, but resisted the belief. She liked Bethune, but not well enough to wish to see him carry off her prime favourite. She would have given much to know what had taken place between them, when he had brought out pale, scared Edith from her subterranean refuge.

Our heroine had frankly described her feelings towards Mrs. Trevelyan, but preserved an absolute silence on other points, and Miss Whitman had too much delicate tenderness to interrogate her, or make any jesting remarks. She was not one of those women always on the watch for signs of interest shown by their bosom friends towards some one of the opposite sex, and who delight in making pointed remarks at inopportune moments, and retailing to all their acquaintances the result of their observations.

Such women, even if without malice in their folly, Miss Whitman likened to children, who pull up plants to see how they are growing, or who drown the tender shoots in continual deluges of cold water. No! the lady of Bellosguardo had a higher appreciation of friendship's duties, so high that she was not in the least piqued by Edith's reticence towards herself. It was quite natural, she said to herself, with that keen sense of justice that only a few of either sex possess.

However, loyalty to her friend did not require her to shut her eyes, so she kept them open, but even her shrewd glances detected nothing positive when Bethune appeared at Bellosguardo for the first time since the encounter at the Certosa. There was the accustomed perfect friendliness between them. Edith showed no embarrassment, no excitement, and the only point that seemed unnatural in the courteous Bethune was his omitting to ask Edith if she had not caught cold by lingering so long underground.

Evidently then he knew that Edith would dislike any allusion to the subject; but she only guessed this, and with all her penetration, Miss Whitman



did not yet understand the complexities of her friend's character. Frank direct people are not always easy to read, and it was precisely because Edith was frank with herself, that she was now on her guard against the new strange feelings that were assailing her, and valiantly trying to bring them down to the level of friendship. There were times when, not being head over ears in love, only on the verge of it, she would persuade herself that it could be nothing but friendship that she felt for this two months' friend. Surely, friendship fully justified her in disliking to see him with her old enemy, and the mark of ill-natured gossip?

It was during Bethune's visit that Maynard's invitations for the studio party arrived.

"Is the boy mad?" exclaimed Miss Whitman, holding up the scented, monogrammed note. "An afternoon party in July! As though we couldn't go and see his pictures any day! What do you say, Edith? I see that you have a twin invitation."

Edith looked up with a brighter smile than she had worn for many days. "Of course we must go," she said; "he counts upon us. No doubt Mr. Bethune can explain the why and because."

"The usual story," answered Bethune lightly. "Frank delights in playing host, so tries to persuade himself that he gives parties with a view to selling his pictures. He spends several working hours in writing pretty little notes, fills his rooms with flowers, and fancies himself intensely practical, when in fact he is perfectly content with the purely æsthetic amusement of seeing pretty women moving about among his flowers and nicknacks, and receiving more or less intelligent compliments upon his pictures."

"But in July, who is there in Florence to see his pictures?" asked Miss Whitman, with a quizzical smile.

"Oh, he'll have plenty of people,—and this party," added Bethune, hurriedly examining a paper knife with close attention, "this party was arranged at Mrs. Trevelyan's the other night."

The lady of Bellosguardo noticed that Edith's countenance changed a little. "It will be a very stupid affair," she said hastily. "It is really terrible to have to be elegant at this temperature, and we could hardly present ourselves in our dress-



ing-gowns. It is cruel of Maynard to expect us to come and stifle in those small rooms of his."

Edith's subdued look had passed away, resolution shone in her eyes.

"I shall certainly go," she said. "Who did you say is to be there, Mr. Bethune, besides Mrs. Trevelyan and the Smiths?"

Miss Whitman exclaimed mentally, "Brava Edith! quite right not to let yourself be daunted by your old enemy."

Bethune felt annoyed. The idea of the crystal-pure Edith in contact with Mrs. Trevelyan was intolerable.

"It will be quite a fiasco," he said eagerly. "Porta is to be invited, and I know beforehand that Porta will be furious at the trap laid for him, and escape as soon as caught."

But now Miss Whitman glowed with excitement.


"Porta at a party!" she cried. "What a scene for a book! There shall be a trap within a trap. We will surround, amuse, take possession of him. Yes, Edith, we will accept."

## CHAPTER II.

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men  
Gang oft a-gley,  
And leave us naught but grief and pain  
For promised joy."

BURNS.


THERE were already several carriages waiting in the shade of the tall church wall that flanked it to the south, when the Bellosguardo ladies drove into the queer little Piazza where the American artist dwelt. The heat had compelled Edith to discard her usual dark dress, and to-day she was looking her best in a white robe of some thin soft material, displaying to perfection the long graceful lines of her slender figure; and her coils of sunny hair were surmounted by a dainty combination of white lace and pearl-grey feathers. She ran so swiftly up the steep stairs, that her friend pantingly prayed for mercy.



When the latter had regained her breath upon the landing, she looked at her friend with an approving nod. "You will do; you are splendid to-day!" she exclaimed. "And armed to the teeth, too," she added in a whisper, as Edith bent to kiss her forehead. "I wonder which weapon you will use!"

"A picador's lance," returned Edith gaily, as Maynard's door was opened.

Bethune was right about his friend's extravagance; even the ante-chamber was full of flowers. Roses were everywhere; red roses blazing in a lofty tripod stand on brazen claws, roses of all shades blushing and gleaming in vases, bowls, and plates. Great tropical plants made graceful patches of greenery on which eyes rested thankfully. Bits of Japanese china and lacquer ware were scattered about on the tables. From one room the owner's own works were altogether banished to make room for a collection of Japanese pictures on crape and silk. Then, in a smaller room, a perfect bower, were hung several poetical sea-pieces and flower studies. Here they found Maynard half engulphed in the billows of lace and muslin belonging to the



ladies who surrounded him. A clatter of tea-cups and clinking of ice-plates made an obligato accompaniment to a babble of many voices, above which the western American twang rose predominant. A few men stood here and there—dark islands amid seas of millinery.

“Your enterprise is a great success, Mr. Maynard,” said Edith, as her host glided through the muslin surf to shake hands with her. He looked very pale and excited.


“And I know that you are heartily wishing us all gone already, if you would only confess it,” said Miss Whitman with one of her kindest, keenest smiles.

“Some, yes,” he said frankly, “but not all; certainly not you.”

The popular lady of Bellosguardo, knowing nearly all present, was speedily surrounded by acquaintances, while Edith asked Maynard if he had succeeded in entrapping Porta.

“I have, and he is in the studio with Bethune, totally unconscious of the fair enemies waiting to fall upon him outside.”

“Depend upon it he’ll fight his way through them,” replied Edith.



"I hope not. I shall ask Miss Whitman to go in and soothe him before I venture to introduce Mrs. Trevelyan."

"Is Mrs. Trevelyan here already?" asked our heroine in a scrupulously unemotional manner.

"She came half an hour ago with Bethune; there she is by the window, half hidden by those men."

"Ah! I see her now, dressed in pink and white," said Edith coldly.

"Do let me bring you an ice, Mrs. Henderson, the heat has made you quite pale," said a young Englishman standing near, who entertained for Edith an ardent, boyish devotion, of which she was entirely unconscious.

"Thank you, no—yes," she answered nervously, inwardly wishing herself back at Bellosguardo, and hard at work before her easel.

Just then Bethune's head appeared in the curtained doorway opening into the studio. He was anxiously looking for some one, probably for Mrs. Trevelyan, thought Edith, as she watched him from her corner. But Bethune's glance swept round the room, taking in the pink and white

apparition by the window without any change of expression. Only when his eyes met Edith's, his face brightened instantaneously, and swiftly making his way towards her, he said, without any preliminary words of greeting—

“I want you particularly, Mrs. Henderson. Porta is furious, inveighs against what he calls the sharp practice of these Yankees, and wants to go away at once. I think you could persuade him to stop.”

“But he is right, Mr. Bethune,” answered Edith decisively, as she took his arm. “It was too bad to ensnare him. Still, an art discussion with Miss Whitman would probably reconcile him to the treachery.”

Mrs. Trevelyan came fluttering towards them as they approached the door. There was a spiteful glitter in her eyes when she said, in silkiest accents—

“Dear Mrs. Henderson, how do you do? Really I hardly recognized you; you look so strange in white.”

Her sneering voice made Edith's blood tingle. “I am less faithful than you, perhaps, Mrs. Tre-

velyan," she retorted, exchanging the limpest possible hand-shake with her adversary; "I remember that pink and white used to suit you charmingly some years ago." But directly the words had left her lips, Edith felt degraded to her enemy's level, and repented the littleness. Bethune was puzzled by her rapid changes of expression; Mrs. Trevelyan's he understood.

"Has the magic moment arrived for entering the studio?" asked this lady hesitatingly of Bethune, without again crossing words with Edith, and her amazement was unfeigned on learning that for her it had not yet arrived. Maynard was very mysterious, she remarked, tossing her head and moving away in search of that unlucky individual.


"Poor Frank will find himself between two fires," said Bethune, smiling significantly on Edith, as he drew aside the door curtain for her. They found Porta with his hands behind his back and his legs apart, standing before one of Maynard's best works—a view of Venice from the Lagoon near S. Clemente. It was a tranquil evening effect; a sea of glass, violet grey in the shade of the land,

coppery sheen in the light. Two boats were coming up from Malamocco, their painted sails full spread to catch every breath of air. There was the quiet garden side of the Gindecca, soft and mysterious. There was S. Giorgio's towering spire and gracefully swelling dome. Looking upon this picture, one could almost imagine that one heard the bells of S. Clemente (sweet bells, though belonging to the refuge of jangled reason) ringing across the water.

"Questo è bello, questo è bello" (this is fine), repeated Porta emphatically. "He has done nothing so good as this before. Ah!" he said as Edith held out her hand to him, "I have been thinking of you, Signora. Have you followed my advice?"

"Most implicitly," answered Bethune. "I can vouch for Mrs. Henderson being the steadiest of workers."

"You look it," said Porta brusquely. "When will you come for your second dose of advice? Let it be soon, for I go away next week. Now Addio; I am going to cheat Maynard, and make my escape before his flock of chattering magpies come in."





And taking up a much battered hat, the misanthropic artist turned towards the door.

But Edith lay her hand upon his arm, and said entreatingly, "No! Signor Porta, I don't think you will be so unkind. It is not a very great favour that Maynard asks of you."

"No one will bite you, my dear fellow," said Bethune, rather sarcastically. He was ready enough to defend Porta behind his back, but it jarred upon his nerves to see Edith praying him to stop.

Meanwhile Edith was awaiting Porta's reply, looking at him with direct beseeching eyes.

Porta's fear of women came almost wholly from an instinct of weakness. It was a new experience to him to have this high-bred foreign woman begging for his company.

"If you will talk to me and keep off strangers," he said gruffly, feeling himself a fool against his will.

Edith reddened a little under Porta's glance, for his eyes expressed admiration if his voice did not. "Miss Whitman and Maynard will help to take care of you," she answered lightly, letting her hand fall.

Bethune stooped to pick up a fallen rose spray,

and replaced it in its vase. Mrs. Trevelyan, with her eye-glass raised, was standing in the doorway with Miss Smith. "Quite a pretty tableau, that group," she remarked with a spiteful titter.

"How handsome Signor Porta is!" exclaimed her companion gushingly. "How I should like to know him!"


"Make your papa buy a picture of him, my dear, and acquaintance will follow."

"Oh, but I would rather he bought one of Mr. Maynard," replied the girl impulsively, blushing vividly as she encountered her companion's sarcastic smile.

Now Maynard made his way to the favoured group in the studio. His duties as host did not sit lightly on him to-day, and it was in a very anxious whisper that he said, "My dear Porta, you must positively let me introduce you to Mrs. Trevelyan and Miss Smith. They came here on purpose to see you."

"Which are they?" was that gentleman's sole reply.

"Those pretty women in the doorway." Porta flashed a brief glance in the direction indicated.



"Thank you, I'd rather not," he said brusquely. "If you want my company, my dear American, don't introduce me to any one, for I prefer to talk with those I know." So saying, and brushing past his disconcerted host, past Mrs. Trevelyan, who, imagining that he was coming to do homage, had an arsenal of smiles ready for use, he walked straight through the crowd to Miss Whitman, and interrupted her talk with another lady by asking her suddenly—

"How does our young American manage to paint so well, when he leads so frivolous a life?"

"Your great Italian masters were not exactly anchorites, Signor Porta," she retorted swiftly.

"What has that to do with it? In their days the world, if tumultuous at times, wagged at a slower pace. In this present of mad feverish hurry and confusion, if artists let themselves be caught by the current their art perishes. Of course," and here he gave a snort, and tossed back his curly hair, "men may paint pictures and live in the whirl, but they cannot remain true to themselves, to their vocation—their works will not live. Look at our restless Maynard here. Has he the serenity

necessary for the production of great works? He is distracted about all kinds of outer things, which the artist should persistently ignore. See now how he is gazing at that young girl there with the soft blue eyes."

"You may call me a Philistine if you like," answered Miss Whitman, with intense meekness; "but it seems to me that it is an artist's business to admire the beautiful in outer things, when he can find it, instead of seeking it only in his inner consciousness. Oh, I have no patience with you!" she went on, indignantly; "it is you who are the Philistine. Were you never a young man, Signor Porta?"

Mrs. Trevelyan, too, was watching enviously the blue-eyed girl—a new star in the Florence world.

"Who is that little thing?" she asked carelessly, as Maynard came flying along, bearing an offering of ice to his divinity. "She seems rather pretty."

"Who?—which? Do you mean Miss Rowland?—rather pretty? More than that, Mrs. Trevelyan."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said that lady with emphatic humility. "I was not aware that she was a particular friend of yours."

"Is she not like you?" answered Maynard flatteringly, as he escaped to his shrine.


This was true. There was an amount of likeness which rendered all the plainer the great difference of age between the two blondes. Mrs. Trevelyan was thoroughly vexed. She had expected to be the queen of Maynard's gathering, and instead, there was this little kitten-faced American girl, monopolizing all the young men. There was Edith Henderson, bright and youthful, in eager talk with Philip Bethune, and the uncouth artist who had so pointedly refused to be introduced to herself.

"This is a very stupid affair: so silly of Maynard to invite so many people!" grumbled Mrs. Trevelyan to her friend, Miss Smith, who, smiling the sickly smile of the bored, was fanning herself resignedly. She, poor girl, knew no one present, and Mrs. Trevelyan never remembered to introduce people to her. So she too was quite ready to go, and they both retired from the field,

after bestowing upon their host the usual small coin of conventional hypocrisies.

Maynard's spirits rose after their departure. He became radiant. Was not Miss Rowland there, and had not her lips praised his paintings? What mattered it if no one had given him a commission? Artists must let their works be seen; buyers would come another time. But by-and-by, when Miss Rowland had gone, his spirits sank again, and he asked himself why he should have taken so much trouble to entertain a herd of acquaintances. One of his choicest Japanese cups had been thrown down and broken. That was the definite result of his efforts.

The rooms were nearly empty now, the floors strewn with scattered petals of the sweet faded roses. Maynard was moralizing over his porcelain fragments, Miss Whitman commiserating, and promising an infallible cement with which to put them together again, while Bethune and Edith were alone in the studio, turning over a portfolio of flower studies. They had been talking briskly enough about art in general, but now a sudden silence had fallen upon them.



"How exquisitely Maynard has rendered these primulas," said Edith at last; for somehow the silence was becoming oppressive.

In a voice quite different from his usual calm tones, and without noticing her remark, Bethune asked, "Will you be in Florence in October, Mrs. Henderson?"

"Certainly," answered Edith. "I do not think of going away at all." Then, looking round at her companion, who was standing behind her, she said quickly, "Why do you ask? Oh! you are going away, are you not?"

"I must go," answered Bethune, looking with grave tenderness into the face over which a sorrowful shade was spreading. "I have to go to England on business. My brother has involved himself in a tiresome lawsuit, and wants me to help him in various ways. Can I do anything for you? I hope to return in October."

"We shall miss you dreadfully, Mr. Bethune," said Edith, hurriedly turning over the drawings in the portfolio, and trying hard to conquer the sudden huskiness of her voice.

"Will you really miss me?" he answered. "It

would be a little comfort to know that, when I am entangled in the intricacies of English law. Have you no commissions for me? I should be so happy to do anything for you."

"No," answered Edith, "I cannot think of anything I want, thank you. Ah! yes, there is one thing you could do for me. I should like to send a sketch to a dear friend of mine,—the Mrs. Mortimer I mentioned to you,—who was so good to me when I was miserable. Could you take charge of it as far as London?"

"Most willingly; and more, I can deliver it in person, for I have some friends in her neighbourhood."

"That would be charming! I should like you to know her. I'll give you a letter of introduction," said Edith, in a resolutely cheerful voice. "And tell me, when do you start? To-morrow, perhaps."

"In two days; that is soon enough for me," replied Bethune, rather piqued, for her cheerfulness was lifelike.

Edith looked pained. "Your departure is the first step towards your return," she said quickly, and holding out her hand.



Bethune brightened immediately, and held the offered hand while he inquired once more if she really intended passing in Florence the fierce summer months.

"I don't quite know yet," she answered hesitatingly; "it is a question of coolness and solitude *versus* heat and companionship. I am so happy with dear Miss Whitman, that I do not like to leave her, and she says that she cannot afford a holiday until she has sold the novel that she has just finished."

Bethune was silent for some moments, then—

"You ought not to stay," he said, "it would enervate you for the winter. As an old Florentine I am qualified to give counsel, you know; but, if Miss Whitman left home, you would go with her?"

"Certainly," answered Edith. "But as for starting on a lonely pleasure trip—no, I could not do it, even if Florence became a very furnace. I know too well the burden of loneliness."

"My dear Edith, do you know that every one has gone but ourselves, and that poor Mr. Maynard is longing to get rid of us?" said Miss Whitman's sweet voice, as that cheery little lady rustled into

the studio. "Surely you and Mr. Bethune must have seen and criticised everything by this time."

"I am awaiting your commands for England, dear lady," said Bethune. "Have you no weighty rolls of manuscript to entrust to your faithful knight?"

"Going to England!" and Miss Whitman's dark eyes flashed from Bethune to Edith and back again.

But no! the art critic did not wear the air of either a rejected or a triumphant suitor. Well, she supposed they knew their own business best. "Manuscripts, did you say?" she went on. "Yes, you shall take charge of my last-hatched nestling. If you can drive part of the way with us, I'll give you all due directions for your guidance concerning those dreaded publishers. I can't ask you to come up the hill with us, for gaiety in July is exhausting, and I mean to go to bed early to-night."

"Trust me, your birdie shall not be allowed to return to the nest," laughed Bethune; and when, a quarter of an hour later, the ladies put him down close to the square of Santo Spirito, he had asked and obtained permission to come up to Bellosguardo the following evening, to fetch the manuscripts and our heroine's parcel for Mrs. Mortimer.

## CHAPTER III.

"To know, to esteem, to love, and then to part,  
Makes up life's tale to many a feeling heart."

COLERIDGE.

IN the sultry eventide of the following day, Bethune climbed the Bellosguardo hill as briskly as though the air had been keen with December frosts. His impatience could not brook being dragged up at snail's pace, so, sending round by the carriage road the vehicle that was to take him to the station, he dashed up the steep foot-path, and across the olive grounds encircling the Michelozzi tower. Stopping to regain his breath, looking down upon the stoned city beneath, on the crowd of loiterers by the river side, the stillness around him soothed his nerves, and the restful content he always felt when approaching Edith's presence asserted its spell.

He had never yet had the courage to analyze his feelings towards our heroine, yet he knew that she was the poetry of his life. His imagination exalted her above all womankind; she seemed to exist in a higher, purer atmosphere, far above all human passions, human defects. Now that his departure was fixed, he realized for the first time the strength of the tie that bound him to her, the dreariness of these coming months, without the solace of almost daily intercourse with the sweet earnest being in whom womanly sufferings had not destroyed the light and charm of girlhood. Oh, it was hard to leave her, harder still to go without attempting to bind her to him! Yet she seemed to him so unapproachable in her calm, so absorbed by her artistic studies, that he dared not risk the loss of her friendship by trying to seize more. If she were still unchanged when he returned, why then—then . . . .

When he walked into Miss Whitman's drawing-room, he looked round in vain for Edith: she was still at work in her studio. Miss Whitman wanted to send for her. Bethune objected.

"Pity to disturb her," he said. "Would Miss

Whitman tell him all that he was to do about her novel?" Then, if Mrs. Henderson was still invisible, he would step across the Piazza to say farewell. Miss Whitman, being an intelligent woman, did not renew the offer. Business finished, she remarked that he did not seem to appreciate the privilege of re-visiting his native land. At this Bethune heaved a great sigh.

"I was never before so sorry to leave Florence. This journey breaks up many plans, and the business that calls me to England is tiresome, and promises to be tedious, if not painful."

A sudden impulse seized the lady of Bellosguardo, and, as usual, she followed it.

"We are very old friends, Philip Bethune," she said, with a shade of solemnity; "will you think me very impertinent, if I tell you that I hope this tiresome business of yours is not connected with Mrs. Trevelyan?"

"Certainly not—it is a family affair," he said. Then picking up one of the dogs, and mechanically stroking it, he continued with an embarrassed smile:

"You are too kind to say so, but I am sure

that you also must have thought hard things of me lately."

The lady shook her head, but not energetically.

"I have been much puzzled," she answered, "and frankly, however matters stand, you must know that—in the world's eyes—you are in a false position."

Bethune left his chair and paced up and down the room a few times before replying. At last, seating himself by Miss Whitman's side, and taking her hand in an impulsive way, very unusual to him, he told her all that he had told Edith of the nature of his interest in Mrs. Trevelyan.


His kind friend listened to him most attentively.

"I understand it all," she said, with a quiver of sympathy in her voice, "and am very sorry for you; but, my friend, the world in general would hardly believe in such extreme chivalry."

"Mrs. Henderson believes me," answered Bethune very quietly.

"Does Edith know this? Oh!" and Miss Whitman asked no more, and looked volumes.

But Bethune, though evidently confused, volunteered no further explanation. Then followed a



short silence, which Miss Whitman was the first to break.

"I think you are wrong, very wrong—about Mrs. Trevelyan, I mean," she added hastily, noticing a pained flush on Bethune's face.

He again rose, and leaning against the stove, began pulling to pieces a spray of roses hanging from the edge of a vase. It was a strong proof of Miss Whitman's friendship that she watched the destruction without protest.

"I know it," he said bitterly, "but how can I help it? I do not seek her, be sure of that, Miss Whitman, but when chance brings her where I am, the memory of old times forces me to stretch out a helping hand, no matter at what cost to myself."

His hostess looked at him keenly with those all-seeing, dark eyes of hers. What fools men were, sometimes, she thought. How much more power bad women had over them than good!

"I understand exactly your point of view, dear Mr. Bethune," she said presently, "but, believe me, you are mistaken. Trust the experience of an old woman like myself. Your helping hand can

give no help in this case, and surely, surely you have not calculated the harm to yourself—to your own prospects ? ”

These last words she uttered hesitatingly. Bethune shrugged his shoulders as he answered gloomily—

“ If I am the only sufferer, who is there to care ? As you know I am, practically, alone in the world.”

Miss Whitman remained silent for a moment, puzzled, not persuaded. Was he wilfully or really blind ? So she took refuge in a generality.

“ Don’t say that, Mr. Bethune. No one is really alone in the world ; no one can be sure that his actions have no influence upon others, can pain none. And you have so many friends. I am glad you are going to England. Nothing like the sound common-sense atmosphere of English life for knocking morbid nonsense out of one’s head. I wish you would promise to tell all that you have told me to some unprejudiced Englishman. You would find that he would say what I have said, only in stronger terms.”

“ I know that your advice is good, dear Miss Whitman,” said Bethune earnestly.



"Which doesn't mean that you intend to follow it," retorted the lady, with a shade of impatience; then, noticing how often her companion's glance travelled towards the door, she said, "I am afraid Edith will not come in for some time, but I know that she wants to see you. Do you mind going over to the studio?"

"May I?" asked Bethune eagerly; "will she not dislike the interruption?"

Miss Whitman undertook to promise Edith's forgiveness.

"Don't think me rude if I let you go alone," she said wickedly, "but I have some letters that must be answered immediately."


Two minutes later Bethune was standing by Edith's easel. She had not expected him to come so early. So, what with the surprise of his sudden appearance, and the sorrow of hearing that he was to start for England that very night, half the messages she wished to send vanished from her memory. Bethune, missing the unconstrained welcome to which she had accustomed him, thought her cold and *distracte*.

Thus conversation languished, and Miss Whit-

man might have put off her not very pressing letters. Bethune and Edith were in that midway stage of avowed friendship and unavowed affection, in which the presence of a genial third person is by no means inconvenient, always supposing that the third person has tact. Then tongues are loosened, many things may then be said lightly which have too much significance in a *tête-à-tête*. Especially, too, when either party is not only uncertain as to the other's feelings, but also to some extent uncertain as to his and her own.

For Edith, in spite of the flash of light that had illumined the workings of her heart, had almost reasoned and schooled herself into believing that she had exaggerated her symptoms; that eager friendship might account for them all.

As for poor Bethune, amid his numerous perplexities, one thing only seemed certain: that Edith had some kindly feeling towards him. Again he told himself that he should risk the loss of what he prized so highly, if he tried to pluck what was probably beyond his grasp. But he could not accept this belief cheerfully enough to be very animated during this farewell visit.




Now he was helping Edith to tie up the little picture she was sending to England. Between them, they made a sad bungle of the strings, but at last it was done. Edith thanked him warmly for his promise of giving it in person to Mrs. Mortimer. "It is odd," she remarked, "that you happen to have friends in my part of the world. I wonder if I know them, at least by name?"

"They are not exactly friends," stammered her visitor. "Business calls me into that neighbourhood."

Edith asked no more, imagining that he referred to law business, and Bethune, Miss Whitman being absent, had not the courage to say that his sole business near Parkston was to see the home of Edith's childhood.

And while both were nervously counting the minutes that remained to be spent by them together, while each had a hundred unspoken things to say to the other, a perverse fate seemed to force their conversation into all sorts of indifferent channels. Why did they feel compelled to talk of matters that had no interest for them?

At last, with a slight sigh, Bethune looked at his watch, and rose to his feet.



Was it the light, or did Mrs. Henderson turn a shade paler as she also rose?

"Need you go so soon?" she said; "will you not come over to tea? I am sure Miss Whitman expects you."

"Thanks. No; I have bidden her good-bye. If I stay any longer I shall lose my train."

"You really go, then, to-night?"


"Yes; Giovanni is to meet me at the station with my luggage."

"And these parcels, at the last moment, will they not trouble you? It was very good of you to come all the way to Bellosguardo for them!"

"Did not the mariners of old Syracuse go to pray in the temple of their patron goddess, Diana, before pushing out to sea, Mrs. Henderson?"

Edith smiled, then blushed vividly. "Which of us has the honour to pose as Diana?"

Bethune looked into her eyes. "Need you ask?" he said in reply. "Our dear Miss Whitman is an ideal Minerva. You should paint her as a benignant incarnation of that goddess, with a soft little Chiù owl on her wrist. And now, good-bye, dear Mrs. Henderson," he went on, taking



her hand closely in his own. "Wish me good luck!"

"If I am Diana, I command it," she replied, with an attempt at gaiety. "Your bark shall weather every storm, and glide safely back into harbour. You—you will not be very long away?"


"Shall I find you here in October? I hope to return then," he said, with a long look into the mournful eyes that met his glance.

"Certainly; that is, I suppose so." Edith's calmness was beginning to fail her as she felt the lingering pressure of Bethune's hand.

Gently, reluctantly, she withdrew her own. "I will go to the gate with you," she murmured. Side by side, they walked down the dusky avenue, yet neither spoke. Outside, on the grassy open space, it was still bright and light, and the evening dance of changing colours was fleeting over the Apennines. Bethune would not let his companion pass the gate. "Good-bye, good-bye," he said in a hurried, choked voice. One last warm pressure of the hand that trembled within his own, and the next moment Bethune was in the carriage, the driver cracked his whip, put on the drag, and the

vehicle creaked and jolted across the Piazza towards the steep pitch of the hill. Turning round for one last glance at the shrine that held his jewel, Philip saw Edith still standing where he had left her, by the gate, and fancied that he could see an expression of pathetic reproach on her face. A passionate desire seized him to jump out and go back to her, but he checked the impulse, and the next instant Florence, the valley of the Arno, the world lay before him, but Edith was out of sight.

“Bah! what a fool I am,” he exclaimed, “it was only the shadow of the trees,” and occupying himself with the parcels on the back seat, he resolutely fixed his thoughts on his coming journey. But Edith stood motionless at the gate long after he had disappeared down the narrow gully between villa walls on the edge of the hill. Not until, strain her ears as she might, she could no longer hear the sharp creaking of the locked wheels, which Florentine drivers consider indispensable to safety, even on the slightest incline, did she stir from her post. Then, with a resigned fluttering sigh, she slowly walked back to her lonely studio.



Half an hour later, when the fire-flies were abroad, Miss Whitman, coming in search of her, found her quietly engaged in washing her brushes. The shrewd little lady saw at a glance that her letter writing had been useless. Certainly these two friends of hers were puzzling people.

The quiet restrained sorrow in Edith's face went to her heart, but she felt that at this moment unspoken sympathy was best. So, without alluding to Bethune's departure, she remarked that herself and her animals were pining for their supper. Would those tiresome brushes soon be clean?

"Your patience shames me, dear friend," said Edith, giving her a hearty kiss; "I am ready to come now."

And with one glance round the room, as though bidding adieu to the hopes and memories enclosed within its walls, she resolutely locked the door behind her, and, arm-in-arm with her friend, hurried down the dark avenue. The trees cast very gloomy shadows now.

Some Italians dropping in later were disappointed with Miss Whitman's friend. They had been told that she was uncommonly vivacious for

an Englishwoman; they found her dull and taciturn. For indeed Edith could not nerve herself to talk with strangers that night. Her thoughts were far away, with the traveller speeding across the Apennines.

\* \* \* \* \*

A week or two later and the ladies of Bellosguardo were almost the only English people left in Florence, from which the gay world had long taken its departure. Now Edith discovered that Florentine dog-days were not to be laughed at. Not so hot as India, certainly, but also unalleviated by punkhas, or any other contrivances for reducing the temperature. The very hills looked faint with heat; all day and every day the sun blazed pitilessly, and even when the angry glowing ball disappeared behind the mountains, there was no freshness anywhere save on the summit of the Colli. The nights were even less supportable than the days, for then the voracious mosquitoes were on the war path.

Our heroine's spirits flagged more and more; she grew pale and thin, and her very ardour for painting slackened. Even home sickness attacked




her. She caught herself yearning after the cool breezes of the Parkston downs, after Mrs. Mortimer's primrose glades and plantations. She panted for a little fresh air, and the endless sawing of the cicalas irritated her strangely. Yet she had not the energy to decide on a lonely journey; her friend, she knew, could not afford to travel, and could never be made to accept a subsidy. Patience; the heat, like all things else, would come to an end at last!

One morning, after fruitless attempts to paint, she yielded to the langour that oppressed her, and putting her head into her friend's den, where the indefatigable little lady was putting the last touches to a magazine article, she asked leave to come and hunt out a light book to amuse her idleness.

Miss Whitman put down her pen, and scrutinized intently her friend's countenance.

"My dear," said she emphatically, "I don't approve of your looks. I wish you would run away up into the hills, or down to the sea for a change. I might be able to join you after a while."



Edith protested that she required no change, and scarcely disliked the heat. Nothing ailed her but lack of spirits, dissatisfaction with her work.

Miss Whitman shook her head energetically, but before she could continue her remonstrance, the door burst open, admitting the three noisy members of the dog family (who were always exiled from the presence during working hours), followed by the servant carrying a tray of letters and newspapers.

Miss Whitman pounced upon an official-looking letter, bearing the stamp of an eminent publishing firm, exclaiming: "From S. and E.!" in a tone of intense surprise.

Edith meanwhile was absorbed in her share of the correspondence.

"Edith, Edith!" cried Miss Whitman joyously, "Philip Bethune is an angel. He had the delightful daring to take my novel to Messrs. S. and E. They have read it, they have accepted it, and best of all, offer me almost double the sum I have ever received for one of my books. Oh, my child, if you knew what it was to receive polite notes from publishers, praising your work, but regretting that

the state of the book market, etc., made it impossible for them to accept it, you would appreciate the delight I feel. Now, indeed, we will have a holiday! Let us pack up at once: we are both longing to go away, though we have both held our tongues about it."

Certainly Edith was the readiest of sympathizers. All her langour had vanished: a bright colour had come into her cheeks, her eyes were sparkling with gladness. But she too had received a batch of letters.

Miss Whitman went on with a comical little pout, "I do think that Philip Bethune might have sent me a line to tell me how the victory was achieved."

"Hasn't he written to you?" asked Edith vaguely.

"No," repeated her friend, without looking up from another letter.

"I have had a little note from him," said Edith hurriedly, "about Mrs. Mortimer, you know, and he says: 'I hope the dear lady of the Hill will soon hear of the success of my literary embassy.' He says, too, that Mrs. Mortimer received him most

warmly, that she is soon coming on the Continent, and asked him if he thought I would join her in a tour among the Dolomites."


"The Dolomites!" echoed Miss Whitman, with a pleased glance at her friend's changed face. "I have longed to see them all my life. Let us try those 'untrodden peaks.'"

"You take my breath away!" said Edith, pushing back her hair. "Let me see if Rosy Bingham writes anything about this plan of her mother's. Her letters are so long, I always keep them to read the last," she went on, with an innocent hypocrisy that was not lost upon her friend.

After a short consultation, in which Miss Whitman's energy carried everything before it, everything was settled, and the journey arranged.

Early the next morning, Edith drove down to Porta's studio, armed with a big portfolio and several canvases. The strange artist had been so genial at Maynard's house, that she had lost all fear of him, and now almost forgot to be nervous about his sister.

Porta opened his door, attired in his usual unconventional costume; but on beholding who his



visitor was, he hurriedly showed her into the studio, disappeared, and almost immediately returned, struggling into an ordinary black coat. Edith politely reproached him for standing on ceremony with a pupil.

"I don't want to shock you," was the blunt reply.

Her sketches drew from him several grunts of approval. She was on the right path, he said. Then she timidly produced a study after one of Masaccio's saints in the Carmine.

"But I told you not to do that yet!" said the painter, with a flush of angry surprise in his eyes. "Had you forgotten that?"

Edith met his glance composedly enough.

"No; but I was sure that I could do it, and gave way to the temptation."

Porta looked more astonished, less angry. "Most women would have pretended that they had forgotten," he said gruffly. Then he examined her work for some minutes without uttering a syllable of praise or blame. Edith lost patience.

"Is it so very bad?" she asked, with sudden courage.

"Not at all; it is positively good. You have improved wonderfully in these weeks, better even than I expected." And Porta stared down upon her with an approving look in his prominent, rather near-sighted eyes. "Your countryman was right when he assured me that you would work well."


"Did Mr. Bethune say so?" inquired Edith, bending over her portfolio.

Then she spoke of her proposed journey, and asked the artist where he was going.

Porta told her that he was going into the heart of the Tuscan Apennines, and hoped to see no one but peasants and shepherds for the next two months. Edith made the mischievous reply, that in that case it would be an empty compliment to wish that he and she might meet during their travels. Porta looked at her with an air of gloomy inquiry. He never understood jokes.

"I never leave Italy," he said. "I do not like to be far out of reach of my poor sister, although an old friend comes to take care of her during my absence."

With a nervous glance towards the door of the second studio, Edith asked if there was any im-




provement in her condition. The painter shook his head.

"She will **never** be better mentally, I fear," he said **mournfully**.

Edith's face expressed her sympathy, and she longed to tell Porta that she knew the whole sad story, and the noble way in which he bore the burden of sacrifice. She was preparing to go, when she was startled by the sight of a rough but unmistakable likeness of Mrs. Trevelyan pinned against the wall. Involuntarily she made an exclamation of surprise.

"I thought you had renounced portrait painting?" she said.

"I have," answered Porta. "The longer I studied human nature, the more was I overwhelmed by the predominance of evil over good. I determined to do nothing towards preserving the outward presentments of those strange compounds of evil we call men and women. I will tell you why I sketched that lady. It was in order to remember to give you a warning. I do not know what she has to do with you; I do not know why she hates you; but hate you she does. I studied



her face attentively that afternoon at the American's house. I watched her when she looked at you. Beware of that woman—she is wicked ; she wishes to injure you. It was written clearly in every line of her evil, pretty face.”

Edith shuddered slightly. “You are right,” she answered. “In past years she did injure me cruelly, but I do not think that she can harm me now.”

“She will try, she will try,” said Porta energetically. “*Cara, signora*, be upon your guard against that woman.”




## CHAPTER IV.

"Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt  
Weiss was ich leide."

GOETHE.

ABOUT midway down the fertile Pusterthal, between Franzenfeste and Lienz, stands the large village of Niederdorf. It is very like the German toy villages which one can buy in boxes for a shilling or so; and if one adds the contents of another box containing farm buildings, trees, and domestic animals, the resemblance is complete. The wooden houses, for the most part stuccoed, with projecting balconies and grey slate roofs, stand back a few feet from the road, and are bordered by plots of turf. Wooden benches beside the doors allow the inhabitants to enjoy their prodigious pipes in the open air, while resting after their day's work. Bands of great fat geese waddle contentedly to




and fro. Quick snorts and slow, deep grunts from numerous outbuildings among the cabbages, proclaim the presence of abundant material for future sausages. Tidy, well-fed children, looking like men and women cut down, pursue their sports with a certain northern sedateness. Their sturdy, stumpy mothers wear a strictly utilitarian costume, consisting of a dark stuff gown, almost entirely hidden under a long, voluminous apron, stout leather shoes, and a round black felt hat.

In the middle of the market-place is the customary Tyrolean wooden fountain, presided over by a wooden St. Florian. Some of the square-built, comfortable houses bear quaint inscriptions in old German. Of these some invoke the patron saint's protection against fire; others are rhymed precepts towards godly living. There are two churches, and the larger of them boasts a lofty red spire, terminating in a large red bulb.


Piles of newly-sawn planks are to be seen on all sides, for the abundant streams of swiftly-running water work numerous saw-mills, and a pleasant odour of pinewood and sawdust fills the air.

Sunny pastures and cornfields, dotted with




occasional farm-houses and barns, surround the village, sloping up to the dark fir-woods that cover the mountain-sides.

But there is little in Niederdorf itself to content a painter's eye. The valley at this point is too much like a very wide trench; the belt of fir forest is too straight and unbroken, the outline of the mountains too monotonous. It is only when looking down the valley towards Toblach that one has a glimpse of grand mountain forms. For in that direction rises the imposing mass of the Roth Koffel, a mighty cluster of grey peaks and crags, over ten thousand feet in height, towering up behind forest-clad outposts. It is seamed with avalanche tracks and streaks of snow; there are reddish stains here and there on the pale grey surface. In the centre of the group is a curious double-horned crag dominating the others. But it is at sunset, of course, that the mountain is finest. Then it seems to walk forward; the peaks assume a human expression, and look like the veiled figures of some vast mourning procession. Go a little further down the road, and they change into open-mouthed frogs, with heads uplifted towards heaven.



Here, in Niederdorf, arrived Miss Whitman and Edith, a few days after receiving the welcome London letters that had replenished the purse of the one, and restored the spirits of the other. They would willingly have lingered under the arcades of Botzen, that fascinating German town embosomed in Italian scenery, but the more than Italian heat reflected into the sunny valley from the porphyry hills around, warned them to hurry on to the fresh breezes of the Pusterthal. They found comfortable quarters in the cosy Black Eagle, overlooking the market-place, and presided over by a kindly landlady and a smiling daughter, pleasantly known to all who have stayed under their comfortable roof. Edith had written to Mrs. Mortimer before leaving Florence, so she contentedly postponed all further travel plans until her answer should arrive.

Meanwhile the change of country and climate, the rest, and the novelty of all their surroundings, were very grateful to both our working bees. Passing their days in the open air, Miss Whitman soon looked ten years younger; and as for Edith, she almost succeeded in persuading herself that all her




recent sadness and disquiet proceeded from overwork. Over and over again she told herself that her lot was a happy one. She had kind friends, she had an object in life; what more could any reasonable woman want?

Mrs. Mortimer's reply soon came, and Edith read it aloud to her friend, seated on a mossy rock at the skirt of the forest, in full view of the weird Roth Koffel.


It ran as follows :—

“ DEAR EDITH,

“ You have taken me at my word, and I snatch at yours. I shall travel nearly as quickly as my letter, and expect to find you and your friend at the unknown village you have chosen for our meeting-place. But why didn't you fix on Botzen? I wanted to come over the Stelvio, the only pass that is new to me, and now I find that the old familiar Brenner will be the most direct route to the Pusterthal. But I won't grumble; it is too delightful to know that I shall see you, without having to come all the way to Florence, to rout you up from your work. And I am enchanted that Miss



Whitman will be with you. I am longing to know my Rosy's amiable rival in Frank Bingham's affections. Poor Rosy! her travelling days are over for the present, and I only run away from her now, because I foresee that, later on, grand-mamma will be too indispensable a person to get any leave of absence. Be sure that I mean to make the most of this holiday, which I really need, for I have had a desperately fatiguing season, I weakly undertook to present two charming girls, daughters of an invalid friend, and thereupon found myself booked as their *chaperon*. How I repented of my good nature when nodding among the wall-flowers night after night at crowded balls! Late hours don't suit me as well as they once did. Then, too, I had to bear upon my poor shoulders nearly the whole weight of a fancy fair. I got up a concert, amid innumerable difficulties, for the benefit of a sweet Italian girl with a voice; a voice, my dear, that only requires more training to win her a world-wide reputation! Besides all this, I have had a hundred and one smaller matters to attend to which have literally worn me to rags. A trip on the Continent is the very thing I need, to



refresh my mind and body, and recruit me for home cares. It was some trouble to persuade Mr. Mortimer to go to Scotland without me. But after all, it is good for husbands to be relieved of their wives occasionally. They enjoy their liberty at first, and appreciate our society all the better afterwards ; and we wives are certainly all the better for a reprieve from masculine fidgets. Now, Edith, prepare yourself for fierce attacks on your last craze—the painting mania. Ungrateful this, you'll say, after the capital specimen of your new power brought to me by Mr. Bethune. My dear, I am delighted with your friend. How is it that you have never mentioned him in your letters ? ”

At this point, Edith's voice changed a little, the sun came in her eyes, and Mrs. Mortimer's handwriting became troublesome to read.

“ From the details he gave me, it is clear that you are very intimate. We had not been chatting ten minutes before I discovered that I had known his mother when she was a girl. Such a pretty creature she was ! Her son isn't a bit like her.”

“ It is one of Mrs. Mortimer's specialities,” said

Edith, with a nervous little laugh, "to know, or have known, everybody's mother."

"Of course," answered Miss Whitman. "I should have predicted that of her. But please go on with the letter, Edith; I like it: it is so characteristic."

So Edith, who had put aside the closely-written sheets, took them up again, and after some apparent difficulty in finding her place, went on hurriedly—

"I plied him well with questions about your sweet self, and then he became expansive. As far as I could make out, his great object in coming to see me was to have a glimpse of Parkston. I drove him there after lunch, and wanted to bring him back to dinner, but he had to rush back to town to catch some train to another part of England. He told me that you promised to do great things in art, and I can well believe it; but surely you must have a dash of gipsy blood in you, my dear, or you would be content to settle down and paint in England. We'll discuss this and other questions in the wilds of Tyrol; and, meanwhile, believe me,

"Your ever affectionate,

"SOPHIA MORTIMER."





"I know your friend already, Edith," remarked Miss Whitman, with one of her quick little nods. "A kind-hearted, feather-headed, quick-witted woman of the world, whose good-natured vanity in believing herself indispensable to everybody about everything, has kept her young, and saved her from becoming selfish. Vanity is a fault that often develops into virtue."

"That is very true," said Edith, tenderly folding the long letter and stroking it as though she loved it, "but I can never reason about Mrs. Mortimer, remembering all the false theories I held about her in my arrogant girlhood; her spontaneous goodness to me filled me with passionate gratitude, and now when I think that I may see her dear kind face again, this very day, perhaps, I feel too happy to sit still and work. I don't think that this sketch of the Roth Koffel will ever be finished." And pushing aside her painting materials, Edith sprang to her feet and stood with her hands clasped behind her head, gazing up towards the pale grey peaks with eager glistening eyes. The folds of her dress fluttered in the summer breeze, her hat had fallen off, and her fair hair was pushed back from her


brow. With her light figure and eager upturned face she looked an embodiment of youthful hope and energy, passion and heroism.

"With that background of pine trees, you make me think of the German women described in Tacitus. You might be chanting a battle song, predicting the defeat of Varus," exclaimed Miss Whitman.

Edith laughed joyously. "See what it is to be a poetess!" she cried; "you think of battle songs, when the simple reality is, that I, plain Edith Henderson, am glad to think that an old friend is near, and am enjoying this pure bright air, that pours health and strength into every vein. Oh, it is a sin to sit reading! Please put away your book, and come and explore this lovely wood for flowers and mosses. You writers think too little of things, too much of words."

"You ungrateful Walkyria!" said Miss Whitman, obediently closing her volume. "What but written words has inspired this joyous mood of yours? and is it indeed only your friend's arrival that has stirred you out of your sobriety?"

"What else should it be?" replied Edith




evasively, bending down over a tuft of strawberry leaves.

"Uncertainties often help to gild certainties," remarked Miss Whitman, with emphatic sententiousness.

"Here's a certainty that requires no gilding," responded our heroine, holding up in triumph a handful of fragrant, deep red mountain strawberries.


The next day Mrs. Mortimer appeared looking very unlike the exhausted being she had described in her letter. She was stouter, ruddier, and more energetic than ever. Sincerely glad to see Edith, she found her prodigiously improved in every respect, appearance included. She speedily fell in love with Miss Whitman, although she only saw and appreciated the playful side of that lady's character and talent. Her store of English news, literary and political, of London chit-chat seemed almost inexhaustible, and Miss Whitman declared that her company was as refreshing a change as a visit to London itself.

At first Mrs. Mortimer was enchanted with all she saw. Niederdorf was the dearest, quaintest



place in the world. She felt, she said, as though she had walked straight into the middle of a German fairy tale, and was sure that every goose-girl whom she saw must be an enchanted princess. She even took great interest in the domestic arrangements of the Black Eagle; would rustle into the *Stube* to see the peasants drinking their beer and playing cards, until their pipes choked her; and would alternately flatter and distract the landlady by penetrating into her well-ordered kitchen, to watch the preparation of the *Nudel* soup and dainty puddings, for which that accomplished Hansfrau is so justly celebrated.

In a few days Mrs. Mortimer had walked Edith off her legs—Miss Whitman gave in the first day—in search of finer and yet finer points of view, and then she discovered that Niederdorf was an unbearably dull place. It was perfectly wicked, she protested energetically, for them to dawdle away their time there, when within such a short distance of the famous Dolomites. “Remember,” she said, “my leave of absence is short; and though I did come chiefly to see you, I mean to see these celebrated mountains also. So




pack your trunks at once, you indolent Southerners, and let us go on to the Val d'Ampezzo."

Her companions were quite ready to obey her orders. Miss Whitman enjoyed her holiday all the better for being relieved from the responsibilities of decision, while Edith hoped that fresh change of scene would enable her to regain the peace of mind that had slipped away from her, and change into reality the cheerfulness she assumed. For Mrs. Mortimer's searching questions and surmises regarding Philip Bethune had completely chased away her good spirits. She was weighed down by depression and restlessness. She told herself that she longed never to hear the man's name mentioned again, and yet, do what she would, he haunted all her thoughts. Often Miss Whitman's eloquent silence irritated her as much as Mrs. Mortimer's open inquiries. Why would these kind friends trouble themselves about her affairs, when all she asked was to be left in peace to battle against the invisible foe that assailed her at all points? Yet, contradictorily enough, there were moments when she longed to throw herself into Miss Whitman's arms and say, "Yes, it is true, I do love Philip

Bethune, but do not believe that he loves me. Despise me if you like, but for God's sake don't—don't pity me."

And instead she went about with a smiling countenance, talked enthusiastically of her art, and pretended never to notice that the two elder ladies often broke off confidential talk when she joined them.

Yet her suffering would have wonderfully diminished, if she had unclosed her heart to her loyal Bellosguardo friend. For Miss Whitman revealed none of her discoveries to Mrs. Mortimer. Communicative enough on all other points, and deeply interested in the details of Edith's former life, abundantly furnished by the voluble English-woman, she guarded her friend's secret as though it were her own. Mrs. Mortimer had to content herself, perforce, with her own shrewd guesses and outspoken comments on the variableness of dear Edith's spirits. Her superfluous energy was thrown into the study of hand-books, and the asking torrents of questions in singularly incorrect German. While speaking of herself as utterly worn out by London exertions, she de-



clared that she was compelled to take the command of the expedition by her companions' total loss of British energy—the result of long residence in Italy.

It was a lovely day, perfect mountain weather, when they turned their backs upon Niederdorf, its geese, its saw-mills, and its cosy Black Eagle, and rattled off in an open carriage loaded with packets innumerable. Edith became silent and pre-occupied as soon as the bustle of preparation was over. Miss Whitman read in her face the old wistful look of trouble, and drew her own conclusions. She knew that no English letters, addressed to Mrs. Henderson, had arrived lately in Niederdorf.

The sun shone brightly ; the fresh breeze swept down the valley, sighing and rustling among the firs and larches ; cattle bells sounded faintly from pastures far above ; the river Rienz rushed merrily over its stony bed. Mrs. Mortimer, having talked herself hoarse, was seized with a desire to drink of its clear waters, and stopping the carriage, made her way to a spot where several streamlets dashed into the wider current. But it is practically no

easy matter for middle-aged persons to drink from a river's bank. Mrs. Mortimer made the discovery that her youthfulness no longer extended to her knees.

"Haven't you a glass of some kind in your bags?" she cried in her perplexity. "I cannot manage to drink."

Edith compassionately hurried after her with a silver travelling cup, and Mrs. Mortimer gratefully accepted the aids of civilization. But in refilling the cup for Miss Whitman, Edith's foot slipped, and in saving herself from falling into the stream, she dropped her cup in the dancing water.

"My cup! my cup!" she exclaimed, gazing regretfully at the spot where it disappeared; and then she ran along the bank in the vain hope of its drifting into some shallower place. But it was gone for ever! no hope of recovering it from so swift a current.

The driver, stolidly unsympathetic after the manner of his nation, laughed gruffly and said that the cup must be far below Niederdorf by this time.

Mrs. Mortimer was full of remorse, as first





cause of the loss. Edith tried to make light of her regret, but explained that the cup had belonged to her grandfather.

Miss Whitman did her best to cheer her. "You looked so like an Undine," she said, "as you bent over the river, that I fancy old Kuhlborn himself must have played you this sorry trick. Are you sure you did not see his bearded face grinning up at you from the water when your foot slipped?"

Edith shook her head. "I was thinking of another face, an evil one, just then," she answered, "and it seemed a bad omen to lose my poor little cup at that moment."

Miss Whitman took up the silver flask lying on the seat and examined it thoughtfully.

"It is strange," she said; "but I too have tender memories of a similar flask and cup. They were favourite playthings of mine when I was a tiny child, and I remember how I cried when my mother took them away from me, because I had made a great dent in the cup by using it as a hammer. It is the earliest event that I can recall."

"There was a dent in my cup too. Another bond of sympathy, you see," said Edith; "but I don't think that I made it, for it always stood on the mantelpiece in my grandfather's study."

"I suppose this was a fashionable pattern in those days," continued Miss Whitman with a slight sigh; "for this flask seems to me exactly like that I used to play with, only perhaps a trifle smaller."


"What county did your family belong to?" asked Mrs. Mortimer, who had the true English-woman's passion for knowing who is who.

"I do not know," answered the lady of Bellosguardo. "I was born in Italy, and never saw England till I was in my teens."

"Did your parents always live in Italy, then?" pursued Mrs. Mortimer, innocently curious.

"I lost both parents when a very young child," answered Miss Whitman briefly, and turning to Edith, she made a remark on the scenery.

A shade of annoyance was visible on Mrs. Mortimer's broad face. She scented mystery, and any mystery regarding birth and parentage implies disgrace to the well-regulated British mind. She



would question her son-in-law on the subject, she thought, in her very next letter.

But now so grand a scene burst upon our travellers, that it was impossible to think of anything else. The road had ascended gradually ever since they left Niederdorf; and now having passed through the scattered hamlet of Toblach, at the highest point of the Pusterthal, they were turning into the wonderful ravine at the entrance of the Höllensteinthal.

On their left the craggy outposts of the Roth Koffel overhung a narrow space of broken ground, covered with mossy boulders and bushes of creeping pine. To the right, a belt of fir forest bordered the road, and beyond this, at some distance, towered one above another, a mighty wall of snow-flecked peaks, of strangest, most daring forms. The foaming river was hidden now below the thick trees, through which the sunshine could only make its way in sharp arrows of light, and neither was its merry music any longer to be heard. The sky was intensely blue; only the lightest, tiniest clouds were hovering here and there over the mountain summits; but what was it that was

gleaming through a narrow opening in the wood like a huge jewel of translucent blue green?

The driver stopped his horses with a guttural monosyllable, and pointing with his whip handle toward the trees, said gruffly: "Der Toblacher, See!" In an instant the three ladies had jumped from the carriage, and with exclamations of delight, were hurrying down the mossy bank among the firs. And now they were on the edge of the lovely Toblach lake, an oval piece of water enframed by trees, like an aquamarine in an emerald setting. This dainty lakelet, too small to receive more than a passing mention in guide-books, is yet one of the most fascinating bits of scenery in all Tyrol. Hidden like a tuft of early violets under overheaped leaves, its tranquil beauty goes straight to your heart; the more so, perhaps, by force of contrast with the shadowy gorge beyond, the sternly grand mountains above.

At the head of the lake stretches a pleasant meadowy space, and here groups of horses were browsing. They were the only living things to be seen in this scrap of fairyland; though a tiny boat moored to the opposite bank was an indica-

tion of human neighbourhood and human occupation. Frowning cliffs stand like mighty side scenes on either side of the Hollenstein gorge. Above these rocky spires, that are almost transparent in the summer sunlight, some pale grey, some strangely stained, as though blood had flowed down their sides into the dusky forest at their base.

Edith looked on the delicious scene with a painter's enjoyment; a glad light shone in her eyes, and her mouth curved into a tender smile, as though she were gazing on some beloved face.

Miss Whitman, as usual, watched the effect of the scenery upon her friend as much as the scenery itself. She, by instinct, studied everything in its relation to humanity. Mrs. Mortimer was volubly enthusiastic; her feelings were never too deep for words. She was indignant at the silence of her cherished guide-books.

"You were right to drag us away from the tame prettiness of Niederdorf," said Miss Whitman presently; "surely those rocks are the portals of an enchanted land. One feels here as though we were waiting in a tranquil empty theatre for the curtain to draw up on some fantastic ghostly drama.

Here all is peace : strife and mystery may await us beyond those mountains."

"And yet," said Edith, meditatively, "we only enjoy this peace because we are about to leave it behind us. If compelled to dwell here, we should soon discover that lakes were damp, tranquillity stagnation. Still, I feel very unwilling to go on. The loss of my cup makes me nervously afraid of the unknown. Sweet little lake ! I must at least carry away some of these brilliant gentians and delicate flowrets, in remembrance of it."

"Edith ! Edith ! I did hope that Italy had cured you of your pessimism !" exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer. "Like a practical woman, I am going to explore the lake as far as I can, while you gather your flowers, and moralize on the terrors of the unknown. Miss Whitman, I see, is busy making notes."

And the active lady walked away over the soft moss with her petticoats well raised above her irreproachable travelling boots.


"How sad you are to-day, Edith," said Miss Whitman ; "is it really only the loss of the silver cup that makes you so nervous, or have you had any unpleasant letters ?"

"I have been wanting to tell you, though words will only give more consistence to my fears," answered Mrs. Henderson, seating herself by her friend's side with her Alpine flowers. "I have seen Mrs. Trevelyan."

"Mrs. Trevelyan!—Here? Only in your dreams, surely," was Miss Whitman's astonished answer.

"Listen! I was sitting at my window yesterday afternoon, finishing a sketch, when a carriage drove up to the inn door. An impulse of idle curiosity made me lean forward to look at the travellers. They were a party of four. One of them looked up as I looked down. It was Mrs. Trevelyan. I drew in my head instantly, but she had already recognized me, and bowed in her usual sneering fashion. I heard my name mentioned more than once as they all talked with the landlady. You may guess how thankful I was that Frau Hollensteirn could not take them in. I heard her suggest Landro and Schluderbach; and finally they drove away grumbling. I cannot get Porta's warning out of my head, and all my pleasure in this journey has changed to fear."

"Poor darling!" exclaimed Miss Whitman ten-



derly, "I don't wonder now at your altered looks. But you must not think of the matter. There are many chances against your meeting her again. Probably she and her friends are rushing through the Ampezzo pass in the usual tourist fashion. Besides, though it is natural that you should dislike coming in contact with her, there is nothing to fear. In what way could she harm you?"

"I don't know. Of course I am foolish, but I assure you I long to turn back and return to Florence."

"Who was with her? Any one we know?" asked Miss Whitman, without raising her eyes from the flowers she was binding together.

"No; there were two men, and an ugly woman extravagantly dressed;—all strangers," replied Edith.

"Ah, that's a blessing. Then you may be sure she is bound on some rapid expedition," said the kind little authoress, with a sudden cheerfulness that brought a bright flush into Edith's downcast face. Miss Whitman continued daringly: "I was half afraid that she might have entrapped our over-chivalrous friend Bethune into dancing attendance



on her once more. Didn't Mrs. Mortimer say that he talked of coming to Tyrol if his brother's lawsuit were again postponed ? ”

“ No! yes! She did say something to that effect. But when he wrote to me—to us, you know—he said nothing of leaving England so soon,” answered Edith, bending lower over her gentians.

“ See, you meditative botanists, how I have been rewarded for my energy,” exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer, coming towards them through the trees. “ Here is something better than your lichens and your tiny flowers. Look at these lovely festoons of the great Alpine anemone. And now, if the mountain air has had its proper effect upon you, I think you'll agree that we had better drive on towards Schluderbach and luncheon.”

So, bidding adieu to the fairy lake, not without many backward glances at its tranquil waters, our party drove away up the winding pass, and even Edith's anxieties were forgotten amid the fantastically grand scenery of the Höllensteinthal. Beyond Landro, up a narrow gorge to the left, the three majestic peaks of the Drei Zinnen burst upon them for a moment; the brief glimpse of these mountain

monarchs greatly inflamed their ardour for the wondrous Dolomites. Then, skirting another lake, the lovely Dürren See, they drew nearer and nearer to the spectral crags of Monte Cristallo, and took up their quarters at its base in the busy wayside inn at Schluderbach.

## CHAPTER V.

"The ruling passion, be it what it will,  
The ruling passion conquers reason still."


POPE.

How it was that Mrs. Trevelyan came to Tyrol and passed beneath our heroine's window at Niederdorf requires a few words of explanation. The lady's German campaign had been cut short by that simple but sufficient reason—want of funds. And although Mrs. Trevelyan had a talent for running up bills in cities where she tarried long and had some credit, ready money was indispensable in a fashionable watering-place, where prices were high, and hotel keepers the reverse of longsuffering. So, living in a style far beyond her means, it was not surprising if Mrs. Trevelyan reached the bottom of her purse long before the end of the quarter. At first, this state of things brought her no dis-

quiet : she had only to appeal to Bethune, to whom she had often appealed before in previous seasons of scarcity.

But this time no answer came to her first, nor even to her second, and more pressing letter, for Bethune having given his brother's address to all correspondents he cared to hear from, had never chanced to call at his club for letters during the few busy days that he spent in London. Mrs. Trevelyan was angry, furious, and alarmed by turns. Finally, she desperately set her wits to work to find a comfortable issue out of her embarrassments.

Fortune soon favoured her, for fortune is apt to smile on those least worthy of her favour. Mrs. Trevelyan was fertile in expedients, and unburdened by any kind of scruples. Given the necessary canvas, she knew how to cover it with the daintiest embroideries. In this case the canvas was ready to her hand in the shape of a dashing Russian princess of undoubted wealth, and still more undoubted ugliness. With this lady, Mrs. Trevelyan had already contracted an acquaintance : they lodged in the same hotel, frequented the same



resorts, and interchanged polite compliments regarding details of each other's toilette. Now, under the pressure of necessity, she carefully nursed and cultivated this acquaintance, till it speedily expanded into a highly convenient friendship. Their tastes were congenial, that is to say, their vices matched. The princess's tastes, though far from simple, may be summed up in one comprehensive monosyllable—men. She liked men, *ergo* she adored dress, amusements, and the sort of society in which she could best gratify her favourite taste. Mrs. Trevelyan liked men too, but in a secondary fashion. Her own love was herself: her own comfort, vanity, and well-being; to all of which men were the fittest ministrants. She did not like men for their own sakes.


The princess was fascinating, in spite of her ugliness. Too keen-witted to be vain, she was quite aware that the first impression she produced on new-comers was one of repulsion. But she also knew, though she had never heard of John Wilkes, that after the first quarter of an hour she could hold her own in the race against beautiful women. So, instead of avoiding Nature's more favoured

daughters, it was her habit to be always accompanied by some undeniably pretty woman, too vain of her beauty to understand the purpose she served.

She had just quarrelled with the bosom friend who had come with her to Homburg when she made acquaintance with Mrs. Trevelyan. The siren's appearance suited her views; her dress and manners pleased her taste; and soon divining the object of the lady's delicate flattery, she invited her to join in a tour through South Tyrol to Venice, where she rented a charming palace, and generally passed two or three months of each year.

Mrs. Trevelyan quickly saw what was expected from her; and the princess was prepared to pay all her new friend's travelling expenses, so the compact was easily made—its unspoken clauses fully understood.

Hate has instincts keen as love. Bethune's silence inflamed Mrs. Trevelyan's enmity towards Edith Henderson. She coupled them together in her bitter rage, and resolved to let no chance slip of playing either an ill turn. It was with an evil joy, therefore, that she recognized our heroine's face at the ivy-draped window of the Black Eagle.




She made inquiries of the landlady, ascertained Edith's probable destination, and trusted to her usual good luck to work some mischief. She even tried to persuade the princess to stay at Schludersbach, but the wild grandeur of the scenery was too severe for the latter, and they and their escort, composed of a ponderous Prussian baron and an Italian naval officer, established themselves at Cortina, to play at mountaineering until it should be cool enough to move on to Venice. Mrs. Trevelyan hated mountains, and, indeed, country life of any description; but she professed to enjoy tottering about the lower hills near Cortina in high-heeled boots and dainty rustic toilettes when supported by the stalwart arm of the German baron, who, correctly got up in green and grey, displayed his stout calves in green woollen Tyrolese stockings, and wore the tallest of black cock feathers in his Tyrolese hat.

This gentleman, big and burly, dark haired, and of a sanguine temperament, had fallen an easy prey to the little blonde's coquettish graces. Also, and crowning fascination, Mrs. Trevelyan affected unbounded admiration for the German

nation in general, and the Prussians in particular. The baron accepted this admiration as the due expression of a natural sentiment common to all mankind; for does not all the world know that Prussians are absolutely faultless, although envy may sometimes make the world attempt to deny it? Still, even truisms come pleasantly from pretty lips, and it was satisfactory to find an Englishwoman sensible enough to enjoy hearing of his personal exploits in the Franco-German war. Having plenty of animal courage, he was modest enough regarding the proofs of valour he had given in the field, but he bragged detestably about the excellent piano and other *spolia opima* which he had sent home to Germany; and one day he presented Mrs. Trevelyan with a valuable trinket hanging on his watch chain, which he had, he said, "picked up" in a French chateau.

She sometimes found it hard to listen sweetly to his sneering comments on the English army; but male adoration, especially German, has to be bought at its own price, and gratified vanity quickly smothered any remnant of patriotism she





still possessed. There were moments when the baron was on the point of laying his hand and heart, his tumble-down Schloss and his numerous debts, at the feet of this too bewitching woman. Mrs. Trevelyan never actually stated that she was a widow, but as in all allusions to her past life she habitually spoke of Major Trevelyan as her poor dear husband, her present associates naturally came to that conclusion. The baron was only waiting to find out the amount of her income before being hurried by his feelings into a set declaration. Meanwhile, he devoted himself to her unceasingly.

But even brisk flirtations, excursions, and cards could not make Mrs. Trevelyan forget Edith's vicinity. It irritated her in the strangest way. She had come to consider it an insult to herself, which justified any and every revenge it might be in her power to take. She neglected no opportunity of questioning travellers from Schluderbach as to whether the English ladies were still there, how they passed their time, etc. But if she hoped to hear anything to our heroine's disadvantage she hoped in vain, and the praises of Mrs. Henderson,

often elicited by her inquiries, only served to aggravate her spite.

She drove up to Schluderbach one day with her devoted admirer, but fortunately for Edith, she and her friends were far away in the forest, and she never even heard of Mrs. Trevelyan's visit.

But malignity is more untiring than benevolence. Mrs. Trevelyan devoted the first wet day to writing another long letter to Bethune, in which, after reproaching him for his silence and renewing her request for the loan (?) of some money, she went on to remark that it was a great pity he should be tied to England. "Not to speak of my poor presence in Cortina, you would find your great friends, Mrs. Henderson and Miss Whitman, a few miles off at Schluderbach. A fashionable Englishwoman is with them, and I am told that they live in a whirl of gaiety, and that the *youngest lady* is surrounded by admirers."

Mrs. Trevelyan, knowing Bethune's dislike to frivolity, imagined that this remark, sheltered behind the "I am told," would suffice to destroy what she considered a mere budding admiration for Edith Henderson. Had she had a clearer idea

of Bethune's state of mind, she would have known that malice had overshot its mark, for her letter had a result totally unexpected by its writer.

Bethune found it at his club amid a heap of others, including Mrs. Trevelyan's former missives from Germany. At last his business in England was finished. He had persuaded his brother to compromise his foolish lawsuit, had advanced the said brother a considerable sum of money for the improvement of the estate, and now had come up to London with a lightened purse and very unsettled plans.

London, out of the season, is a quiet retreat, suitable for purposes of study. There were many works he wished to consult at the British Museum. He might profitably employ himself in that manner for a couple of months at least. So spoke his reason.

His heart and imagination suggested mountain peaks, rushing torrents; and forest glades, and every scene was tenanted by one tall, slender figure. Mrs. Trevelyan's letter instantly turned the scale against reason. He hardly noticed the malicious insinuations; certainly did not believe them. But

why should he remain in London when Edith was settled at Schluderbach? All his plans of study receded into the dim distance of vague future projects. Town was unbearable at this season; the air was used up, and as little refreshing as the atmosphere of a theatre reeking with gas after the curtain has fallen. Besides, if Edith were indeed with a large party, another person added to it would excite no comment, and he would have better opportunities of ascertaining her feelings towards him than in her working days in Florence. So, crushing his letters into his pockets, he loitered down Pall Mall, meditating on sundry pleasant possibilities; but had not walked many steps before he was arrested by the sound of his own name, shouted rather than exclaimed, by a gentleman who was pulling up his horse close to the pavement.

“Bethune! You in London!”

“What! Trevelyan! I thought you were still in India!”

“By Jove! Bethune, your life must have been an uncommonly easy one; you don’t look a day older than you were ten years ago. Look at

me! India has played the deuce with my constitution."

It needed a very short look to show Bethune that other causes than the climate had been at work on Mrs. Trevelyan's husband. He was not merely worn and ill and sallow; the stamp of dissipation and excess was upon him, and had changed almost beyond recognition the once handsome features of "dashing young Trevelyan."

The two men had been a good deal thrown together in the old days before the object of Bethune's youthful love had thrown him over for the other, but even then there had been little real friendship between them, and afterwards, as may be imagined, Bethune had never sought the society of his successful rival.

After a few of the stock phrases current among men who have not met for years, and have no sympathies in common, Trevelyan said suddenly, "You are the very man I wanted to see, Bethune. Can you give me any news of my wife?"

"I can," answered Bethune, quietly, without thinking it necessary to add that several sheets of Mrs. Trevelyan's pointed scrawl were at that

moment lying crumpled up in one of his pockets. "What do you want to know about her? Is there any hope of your coming together again?"

"No, hang it!" replied Trevelyan, with a forced laugh; "that would suit neither of us, I imagine. If I hadn't been a confounded fool, I should have got a divorce long ago, and been free of her altogether. If you are disengaged, and you don't look like a man in a hurry, I wish you'd turn into St. James's Park with me and talk the matter over. Things can't go on as they are."

Bethune hesitated an instant, while he looked in Trevelyan's face. Remembering the false position in which he had voluntarily placed himself, it flashed upon him that possibly the major was seeking an occasion to pick a quarrel with him. But his weakness was not of a kind to make him shrink from the consequences, however disagreeable, of his own actions, and he answered that he was entirely at the major's service. Possibly, the formal politeness with which he assented to his companion's proposal gave the latter a clue to his thoughts, for he smiled sarcastically as he

turned his horse's head down the road past Marlborough House.

Neither spoke again until they were within the park, where all was still and gloomy. It was one of those misty, sunless days so frequent in our climate. The air was heavy and oppressive; the blackened foliage of the lofty trees, from which all summer freshness had long departed, looked almost funereal. Very few people were about, and altogether no fitter place could have been found for private conversation on unpleasant topics. Soon Trevelyan dismounted, and twisting the reins over his arm, walked leisurely by Bethune's side, his head bent forward, his toes slightly turned in. There was something in his manner of walking that suggested moral degradation; indeed, his whole appearance was rather that of the traditional billiard-marker than of an officer in Her Majesty's service.

Philip was the first to break silence. "I suppose you know that Mrs. Trevelyan passed last winter in Florence? At present she is travelling in Tyrol with a Russian princess, and writes that she is in good health and spirits."

"Of course she is, devil take her!" was the major's expressive comment. Then, standing still, raising his head and looking at Bethune, in a franker way than before, he continued—

"Perhaps you are wondering why the deuce I question you about my wife? Or perhaps you think I have heard reports that need explanation from you? Don't interrupt me, please. Well, I have heard reports, thousands of 'em, and many fellows would call me worse than a fool for asking any explanation, save one, from you. I may be a fool, but I know my lady thoroughly, and I think I know you, Bethune, and there's my hand, old fellow. If there were more men like you in the world, there would be fewer bad women."

"Thank you, Trevelyan," said Bethune simply, returning the major's grasp. "Now let me be frank in my turn. Was all the fault on Mrs. Trevelyan's side? Were you quite justified in withdrawing your protection from her, and letting her go adrift in the false position of wife and no wife?"

"Amply justified!" cried Trevelyan hotly, "but it would have been deucedly inconvenient to have



sued for a divorce just then. She had driven me mad, the cunning devil, stark mad, and when a man is crazy, he's no longer accountable for his actions. I longed for peace and quietness, so let her go to Europe with a handsome allowance, and hoped I had washed my hands of her for ever. But I have had heavy losses lately; luck always against me, have exchanged into another regiment, and, in short, can no longer afford to let her kick up her heels in luxury on the Continent. Besides, she never keeps within her income, liberal as it is, and when my agent refuses to make advances, she runs up heavy bills. Things can't go on like this. Sometimes I wish to heaven some man would run away with her, and take her off my hands altogether. But no such luck; she's too calculating for that sort of business. No doubt she gets money from others—I have heard that she sponges upon you; but that does not save my purse."


Trevelyan's cynicism deeply disgusted Bethune, and it needed an effort for him to be able to ask quietly what the major proposed to do.

"Something that will bring Mrs. Trevelyan to

her senses. Reduce her allowance one half, and threaten to stop it altogether if she doesn't settle down respectably in England. She may have the use, rent free, of a little place I have down in Lincolnshire. If she does not choose to accept these terms, she may go to the devil her own way and be d—d. Not a penny more shall she have from me."

And Trevelyan carelessly knocked a fly off his horse's neck with the tip of his riding-whip.

Bethune was silent for some minutes. Better, perhaps, than her own husband he knew Mrs. Trevelyan's faults; but he had once loved her. Recollections of what she had been as a girl, a petted darling brought up in luxury, made him very lenient to her in spite of everything, in spite of himself. Surely this man had never loved her as he had! A thousand excuses for her conduct arose in his mind. Yet in the eyes of the world, the husband had justice on his side. It was difficult to plead her cause. He did plead it, however, and earnestly enough. He besought Trevelyan to make a last attempt at reconciliation, alleged the numerous



temptations that beset women in Anglo-Indian society.

“Believe me,” he said in conclusion, “she is mad rather than bad. In Florence her life was foolish enough, fast if you like, but no worse, for that I can vouch. Give her a last chance. See her yourself, offer her the protection of your home. You say that she is calculating. Well, she has reached a time of life when she ought to appreciate the advantages of a respectable position. I don’t suppose you would ever be happy together—it is too late for that, but you might get on as well as many other couples. If the experiment failed, you could then justly seek a legal remedy, and you would have the satisfaction of feeling that you had done your duty honestly by her. You have put her in a far worse position than that of a divorced woman. Think of that!”

Trevelyan winced more than once while Bethune spoke, but he listened far more patiently than the latter had thought possible.

“There is some truth in what you say,” replied Trevelyan, in a tone less hard than before; “but, hang it! past wrongs will rankle. And, once upon

a time, I had complete faith in that woman. Why, all the regiment laughed at me, knowing her behaviour with that fellow Henderson (I dare say you never heard of that), while I, like a blind fool, saw and suspected nothing. It was only after the man's death that I discovered how she had deceived me. Damn it! I don't know what to do. I believe the real reason why I never want to see her again, is for fear she should bewitch me in spite of myself, and wheedle me back into slavery. I used to be wax in that creature's hands. Yet I should hardly like to die with the consciousness that I had helped her on the road to destruction. I am pretty well done for, Bethune, and don't believe that I shall drag on much longer. The doctors tell me I should get well if I obeyed their directions, but I can't get on without stimulants; I should go melancholy mad in a week. See her, you say! Well, I'll think it over, and, meanwhile, there'd be no harm in writing to her."


Bethune told him that he was going abroad in a few days, being engaged to meet friends staying at a short distance from Mrs. Trevelyan's present abode, and offered his services as ambassador and

mediator. The major received this communication with an astonished stare, and gave a prolonged whistle.

Bethune reddened angrily. "I hope you understand, Major Trevelyan, that I shall only seek your wife as your agent," he said haughtily. "My party is not likely to be in contact with hers. My advice, I repeat, is that it would be best to seek her yourself."

Trevelyan shrugged his shoulders in an undecided manner. "At any rate, I'll write," he said, "I'll promise you that much."

Then the men parted, and Bethune's first act was to send a long letter to Mrs. Trevelyan full of friendly exhortations, and, what pleased her far better, a cheque for double the amount he had proposed sending her before his meeting with her husband. That done, he busied himself with preparations for his journey. He would not write to Edith, for he could not trust himself to write a merely friendly letter. Neither would he write to Miss Whitman. It would seem so strange to enclose no line for her friend. Better to surprise them both, and as soon as possible. He longed



to escape into purer air. His conversation with Trevelyan had thoroughly depressed him, dragged him down as it were into an atmosphere heavy with meanness and vice.

## CHAPTER VI.

“Ya! ein Zauberwuld ist hier,  
Was hier lebt und wachst,  
Stein und Blume, Baum und Thier,  
Alles ist verhext.

\* \* \* \* \*

Waldesruhe, Waldesluft,  
Bunte Mährchentraume,  
O, wie labt ihr meine Brust  
Lockt ihr meine Reime.”

FREILIGRATH.

“L'infinita vanità del tutto.”


LEOPARDI.

EVEN the restless Mrs. Mortimer was content to settle down at Schluderbach. Here, indeed, she said, was true mountain life. It was a capital centre for excursions to many of the grandest Dolomites, and a day spent at Cortina and Cadore convinced her and her companions that nowhere else could such quiet, clean, and rural quarters be found as in the wooden *annexe* of the Schluderbach

hostelry. The inn itself was noisy and crowded, but they never entered it excepting to take their meals. Soon the little wooden box-like rooms occupied by the three ladies assumed a home air. Given a few dishes of flowers, scattered books and painting materials, the meanest dwelling becomes refined.

What mattered scanty furniture, lack of curtains and carpets, when from their windows they could look upon the jagged peaks and glaciers of Monte Cristallino, the wooded pass towards Auronzo, mountain pastures, and the picturesque clearing behind the hotel, dotted over with mossy fir stumps around which flourished all kinds of delicate flowrets! Here, towards evening, was generally held a sort of cattle parliament, whose members were quite as demonstrative in their manners, and almost as noisy, as the two-legged constituents of great continental assemblies.

Then, they had only to step through the door on the hill-side to find themselves among the fragrant woods clothing the heights behind and beyond the *annexe*. A breezy summer-house of rustic lattice-work overhung the road, and from





this post of vantage they could, when so inclined, view the human life of Schluderbach, see all who came and went ; groups of peasants and sportsmen, occasional soldiers and pedlars, footsore pedestrians and brisk tourists, drinking, eating, and chatting at the tables by the road-side. Here too they could watch the ever changing sky, and the approach of the swift summer storms that almost daily swept down the valley, clearing off as rapidly as they came.


Then, when the sun shone forth again, and every fir needle was diamond-tipped, they had only to step down into the road and walk round the first turn towards Ampezzo, to behold the strange red cliffs of the Roth Wand, Gilbert's "Mount of Sacrifice," glowing behind the trees. Further on, a great cascade came leaping through a narrow cleft in the rocks, and re-appeared the other side of the road transformed into a playful rivulet, trickling merrily over white pebbles among the firs, and with groups of cattle near it nibbling rich grass, wherever the forest had been pushed back to make room for a patch of meadow land.

The old road to Ampezzo had cut through the

woods at a lower level than the present one, and now this disused highway was like a grass drive in some old English chase, and often tempted our heroine and her friends to follow its windings for miles among the noble firs, in search of more and more gentians and daphnes, and wild rhododendrons, and numerous other treasures of the rich Alpine flora.

As day after day flew by without anything being seen or heard of the Trevelyan party, Edith's disquietudes were stilled, and if she could have had any news of Bethune, or, better still, one tiniest scrap in his handwriting, she would have been entirely content. But nothing came. Since that one letter recounting his visit to the Mortimers, neither Edith nor Miss Whitman had had a line from him. And even as a mere friend, Edith felt that she had some right to wonder at his silence, after her own frank and friendly reply. Frank friendliness is easy upon paper, especially to women.

As it was, his silence pained her, filled her with anxiety and foreboding. If only she could know, no matter how, that all were well with him! The



pure mountain air at least gave her strength to fight against the thoughts which she could not quell. She could not help it, if night after night she dreamt that a letter from Bethune lay upon her bed, if night after night she awoke stretching out her hand for it in vain. But she could and did prevent herself from rushing out to meet the mail-bearing diligence that daily lumbered up to the door; could force herself to wait with outward patience till the ugly little Kellnerinn brought in the letters, and a glance showed her that hope was over for another four and twenty hours.

Our heroine was not of the type of which love-sick heroines are made. She carried her head erectly, moved with an elastic step, talked, walked, and occupied herself incessantly. She did not paint much, it is true, beyond making a few sketches, for as Miss Whitman resolutely devoted several hours a day to literary work, Edith could not leave Mrs. Mortimer to wander about or do her fancy-work alone.

This lady's ambitious ardour for mountain excursions faded rapidly, now that she was face to face with the practical fatigues of such expe-

ditions. She could not wear thick boots, objected to tramping through bogs, was too stout to climb with ease, and last, not least, was horribly afraid of the herds browsing everywhere about the mountain sides.

And certainly, the frolics of these lively animals, who had none of the usual cow-gravity of demeanour, were alarming enough to strangers unused to their ways. How was poor Mrs. Mortimer to know that when a cow came charging down upon her from among the trees the moment it saw her timidly coming out of the door, it was animated by no sentiment fiercer than curiosity, and a general delight in kicking up its heels? Commonly, too, the rest of the herd followed its leader's lively example; so that more than once Edith or Miss Whitman, startled by cries of distress, would look out and see their friend shrieking for help behind a barricade of tables in the open summer-house, while feebly waving her parasol at the enemies surrounding her retreat. Then a lanky *knecht*, whose pipe seemed a fixture to his face, would stroll leisurely across the road from the stables or the barn, and laughing hoarsely, would disperse the inquisitive beasts with

a couple of flacks from his long whip. This individual never attempted to hide his contempt for the Engländerinn's useless fears, but would carelessly remark that none of the cattle were dangerous, excepting the bull from Toblach, who was not about that day. Ever afterwards Mrs. Mortimer often mistook a distant cow for the dreaded animal from Toblach, and would as soon have thought of going chamois hunting as of taking a walk alone. Edith's sketching umbrella was even a greater comfort to her than Edith's courage; it had such a nice strong spike!

But a better defender still was now at hand.

One day, when a bright breezy morning was succeeded by ominous storm-clouds, and thick mists hid the jagged peaks of the Cristallino, and hung low over the glacier, the ladies were lingering over their dinner in the pleasant wooden verandah, where they generally ate, to escape from the din and smoke of the low-roofed dining-room, where pipes of coarse tobacco alternated with every course.

The grass had been cut in the meadow behind, and the landlord and all his *knechts* and serving-women were hurriedly piling the hay in huge

waggon driven by teams of stout oxen and horses, to save it from the coming storm. The excited group, the women's coloured kerchiefs and aprons, their bare arms forking up the hay, told well against the background of firs, while an occasional flash of light from the midst of the thunder-clouds shed lurid gleams upon the picturesque scene.

An influx of new arrivals by the Cortina coach startled the ladies from their studies in hay, and their surprise equalled their pleasure on seeing Frank Maynard's tall figure coming towards them. He was escorted by Fraulein Marie, the eldest daughter of the house, whose services were freely bestowed upon all gentlemen, young or old, though she showed little zeal in attending to the wants of lady boarders. From whence did he come? How had he torn himself away from his beloved Venice? were Edith and Miss Whitman's rapid inquiries.

Maynard explained that he had a commission for a mountain subject, and that being exhausted by the great heat of Venice he had come on to Cortina to look round. "There," he continued, "I met with a talkative old gentleman, the *capo politico* or

head boss of the town; he told me of this place, and ended by giving me so eloquent a description of certain ladies staying here, that I guessed I should find friends. So I just pulled up my stakes, and here I am, painting-traps and all."

Miss Whitman turned to Mrs. Mortimer with a saucy laugh. "Frank's informant must be that old gentleman, whose conquest you made the other day. Isn't he tall and stout, with a bushy head of hair, and a sonorous bass voice?"

The description tallied, and Mrs. Mortimer said she was glad she had been civil to the gentleman, since that had been the means of acquainting Mr. Maynard of his friends' whereabouts. Maynard replied, that the *capo politico's* description had been so precise, that he had been able to identify the third lady as Mrs. Henderson's often-mentioned friend, Mrs. Mortimer.

"Oh!" exclaimed Edith, with a start, "we have been chatting all this time, and I have never introduced you formally. Mr. Maynard, Mrs. Mortimer."

"I look upon you already as an old acquaintance," said Mrs. Mortimer cordially, "and indeed

it will be very nice to have a man in our party. I assure you, that what with the cattle and the myriads of monstrous ants that infest these woods, every walk we take is a series of alarms."

And certainly the introduction of this masculine element was a pleasant excitement to all three ladies. Fraulein Marie, as she rapidly wiped away traces of past meals from the oil-cloth cover, which plays the part of table linen in this corner of the world, and placed one smoking dish after another before the hungry artist, privately thought these Englishwomen very cruel not to let him eat his dinner in peace. In vain she offered him her most bewitching smiles, together with a tankard of foaming beer. He took the one, but totally disregarded the other. The blandishments of this monkey-faced, brown-toothed Hebe seldom met with any response from Anglo-Saxon travellers. Germans, as a matter of course, cut broad jokes with every Kellnerinn, however ugly; and besides, generally speaking, German ideas of what is charming in women differ widely from those of other nations. Naturally poor Marie preferred her countrymen in the long run.



Later in the day, after the storm had come and gone, Edith willingly accompanied Maynard in a stroll to a magnificent point of view near the wild ravine leading up to the Cristallino glacier. She was longing to ask about Bethune, and his name had never occurred in the general conversation at table. From her window Mrs. Mortimer caught sight of the couple returning arm-in-arm across the wet meadow in earnest conversation, and bustled into Miss Whitman's room to ask what it signified.

Miss Whitman's surprise was great when her companion's meaning dawned upon her, and she stoutly protested against the notion.


"Well, I may be wrong, but it doesn't look like it," replied Mrs. Mortimer, settling her rings on her plump fingers; "and you know, my dear, I should be thankful for poor dear Edith to marry any one. You say that he is a year younger than she is, as though that were an objection. Why, almost all widows marry their juniors. Good heavens! look at them now: how eagerly they are talking! He has taken her hand, and she is looking up at him and smiling. I do believe he is making an offer."

"H—m, I'm sure there's nothing in it," returned Miss Whitman, less energetically, however, than before. "Men don't make offers in open fields, and certainly—in a novel at all events—the heroine would look down, instead of up, at so critical a moment."

"Ah! there you are! You writers are too much buried in your books to notice what goes on in the world around you."

"And you fashionable people live too much in the world to understand the meaning of all you see," retorted the little authoress with a quiet nod. "I have studied Edith's character, and am sure that Maynard is not a man for whom she would ever feel more than sisterly friendship."

So each lady kept to her own opinion; one fact alone was plain to both, and became daily plainer: the great improvement in Edith's spirits since Maynard came. She could not tell her friends that she was the confidant of the young man's love affair with pretty Miss Rowland, for he had bound her to secrecy; neither did she think it necessary to explain that her mind was relieved by knowing that Bethune was well, and still, at the date of his



last letter to Maynard, detained in England by his brother's business.

Frank found her the best of and most sympathising of listeners. He had but three topics of conversation, but then each allowed of never-ending variations: his lady love, his art, and his friend. And his innocent egotism blinded him to the fact, that whichever of the two first subjects they started with, their talk before long drifted insensibly to the third.


The weather became settled again after a week of storms that had confined our friends' excursions to the immediate neighbourhood of Schluderbach, so at last they put in execution their long-cherished plan of spending a day at the Misurina lake, some five miles away up the Auronzo pass. Edith and Maynard went on horseback, the two elder ladies in an *einspänner*; but, on the point of starting, the expedition was delayed by a comical scene with the landlord.

This worthy cheerfully packed in a basket of provisions at the ladies' feet; he made no objection to a couple of camp-stools; he began to growl when large serviceable paint-boxes were

added, and protested vehemently against the easels. Did they want to take all their furniture, he asked ironically. Perhaps they would like a couple of mattresses as well! They ought to have a cart for those heavy things, he added, looking wrathfully at the slim easels. The Herrschaften had no idea of the nature of the road, or how difficult it would be for even two stout horses to drag the lightest carriage up it.

But his protests were in vain. The easels were put in, and the party set off, laughing heartily at his fears for the safety of his horses. Half a mile from Schluderbach they wondered less at his dismay, for the road was so excessively steep, so much worse than the beds of most torrents, that Mrs. Mortimer and Miss Whitman soon preferred walking to the fearful jolting, and only used the carriage when too tired to climb another step.

About two hours after they had started, an *einspänner* from Niederdorf rattled up to the inn door. This was no surprising occurrence, for the brief Schluderbach season was at its height now. There was a perpetual passage of "ascensionists" of various nations, generally bent on "doing" the




Drei Zinnen. There were English Alpine Club men, who seemed to rest after the manner of horses, standing about in front of the inn, where they were often to be seen inspecting coils of rope, and holding earnest conference with their own pet guides. These gentlemen "took" a mountain before breakfast with the ease with which less-gifted individuals take a half-mile stroll on level ground.

Then there were Italian Alpine Club men in nondescript costumes ; Germans got up in correct Tyrolean dress, showing an uncomfortable space of bare knee 'twixt green hose and dark breeches ; artists, photographers, and general tourists. These latter were usually Austrian, but now and then an English family, equipped with maid and courier, would come for a night on their way to Cortina and Cadore. The keen-faced landlady was often at her wits' end how to provide provisions and accommodation for the fast-incoming guests. Her temper grew sharper and sharper under the strain ; her four ugly daughters, the waitresses, were on their legs from morning till night. Even Marie, the privileged elder one, had few moments allowed

her for the relaxation of flirting, while, as for the pretty, gentle Cinderella who superintended the kitchen operations, woe be to her if she dared to snatch an instant to run out in the road for a breath of fresh air! Her mother was down upon her at once, and speedily hustled her back to her work.

This worthy woman, unlike the genial hostess at Niederdorf, had a decided aversion to English families; and would often declare that every room in the house was full, when, half an hour afterwards, she could find both rooms and smiles for a larger party of compatriots. Those English, she would say, gave no end of trouble with their demands for hot water for tea, and cold water for baths, and if they stayed several days, always insisted on being boarded at a fixed price. It was altogether pleasanter and more profitable to have people for one night, who paid their bills without comment in the morning, and made room for newcomers of the same description. Look at those three Englishwomen over in the *annexe*, why, they had been more than three weeks in the place without drinking a single Schopp of beer! They



filled no end of soup-plates and glasses with their rubbishy flowers; and they wouldn't tell her when they meant to go away, although she asked them the question regularly every morning. When the cook-maid daughter ventured to remark that these obnoxious lodgers were very pleasant and polite, ate little, gave no trouble, and paid punctually, her mother told her not to talk of things she didn't understand, but to go back to her pots and pans.

As for the landlord, old Ploner, a broken-down guide, he took care, at this time of the year, to keep out of his wife's way as much as possible; and shuffled backwards and forwards betwixt tap-room and stable, believing himself terribly overworked, though his chief labours consisted in smoking many pipes, and draining many tankards of beer, while recounting past mountaineering exploits to the attentive ears of younger men.

He was employed in this congenial manner, when the familiar crack of the Niederdorf driver's whip brought him and his wife to the door at the same moment. A dark-bearded gentleman jumped lightly down from the chaise, and taking off his

hat to the hostess, inquired for the English ladies. Were they still there?

The conventional smile disappeared from the Hausfrau's face as she heard the unmistakably English accent of the traveller's German words. Oh yes, they were there; seemed likely to be there for some time. Could he have a room? was the stranger's next demand. "Certainly," said the landlord, possessing himself of the gentleman's portmanteau, and then nearly dropping it as he encountered his wife's angry frown.

"How long did the gnädige Herr wish to stay?" she asked sharply. "There was one room empty, but only for a night or so."

"That will do," said the gentleman pleasantly. And would she kindly tell him where he should find the ladies? His countenance fell on hearing that they were out for the day up at the Misurina See. Then he would take some breakfast, and follow them. Of course he could have a horse and a guide.

More objections. The horses were all out. The ladies and the Herr with them had taken the four best, and thereupon the landlord poured forth



his wrongs : how his *einspänner* had been loaded with all sorts of heavy things ; how certain he was that his two best horses would come back lame, etc. The gentleman shrugged his shoulders good-temperedly, and made light of every difficulty. Since the lake was only five miles away, he would go there on foot ; they could look him up a boy to show him the way while he breakfasted. And though the landlady grumbled out that Schluderbach wasn't a village, much less a town ; that boys didn't grow upon juniper bushes, and that there was no one about the place who could possibly be spared, a boy was in due time produced, and Philip Bethune, in a mood as sunny as the weather, was soon climbing the steep road over which Edith had passed a few hours before.

Mounting higher and higher amid the odorous pines, his spirits rose to positive exhilaration. He seemed to tread on air, knowing that every step brought him nearer to Edith. More and more snowy peaks and transparent pinnacles, quivering in the mid-day heat, rose into view at every turn of the pass. His visions of happiness were as wide as the unknown mountain world over which he gazed.

The rustling of boughs, the murmur of falling water, the hum of insect life, the twittering of the birds, the sweet odours of the forest, the brilliant sky overhead, all was in grateful harmony with his thoughts of gladness. Wild raspberries gleamed among the bushes, turk-cap lilies nodded to him from their mossy thrones. Some scattered flowers lay withering by the road-side. He picked them up and placed them carefully in his breast pocket; for might they not have dropped from Edith's hand! A squirrel scurried up a tree trunk, and then looked down on him with timid eyes. He wondered whether it had seen his Edith pass! Presently, the way led past an alp at the head of the Popena thal; a long sunny strip of pasture, on which numerous cows and calves were browsing, and some skittish little foals capering about, and where a couple of herdsmen and a young woman were busily scrubbing milk vessels at the door of a rough shanty overhung by rocks.

Everything Philip looked upon seemed to him an idyl of peace and happiness. England, business, the Trevelyans, nay, even his tiresome and probably fruitless embassy to Cortina, had all faded from

his mind. He only knew that he was in fairyland, that every step brought him nearer to its queen. This subdued, calm, almost middle-aged man, felt as tumultuously happy as any youth of twenty.

But the mood was too intense to last ; reaction must come. He had turned now into a flat interval, shut in on all sides by mountains, and was picking his way over boggy ground gleaming with the star-like blossoms of the *parnassus*, to avoid the terrible stones of the so-called road, when suddenly, through a gap in the hills, he beheld the grey, orange-flecked peaks of the Drei Zinnen, lined with snow at regular intervals, towering up in gaunt dreary majesty. Fine as they were, they jarred upon Bethune's mood with the effect of a harsh discord suddenly breaking in upon some sweet melody. At that instant Mrs. Trevelyan's malicious words about Edith's gaieties came into his mind—words which, when he read them, had made not the slightest impression.

“Do you know who is with the English ladies?” he asked abruptly of his boy guide, who was engaged in stuffing Bethune's discarded cigar end into his pipe.

"Who!" echoed the lad. "Why, the young Herr, of course."

"What young Herr?"

"The one who is always with them. The girls say he is the lover of the tall lady who paints. And he paints too," said the boy solemnly, emphasizing his words with a prolonged jet of smoke.


Bethune asked no more questions: the sun had gone in, the way was long. What a fool he was to have come toiling up all those hills instead of resting in the Schluderbach valley! But now he had reached the end of the narrow vale, and the road twisted round the foot of a sharp cliff that apparently shut it in. A cool breeze blew in Bethune's face, the loveliest of prospects burst upon his view. Before him, down a slight slope, stretched the tranquil waters of the Misurina lake. Dense forests of fir and larch rose from its shores to the left, high up the mountain side. It seemed to lie at the bottom of a huge green cup, of which one side was broken away to give a glimpse of mountains innumerable, over which hovered the lovely blue haze that one has to go to Italy to seek. For, seen from this point, the little lake appeared to lie

at the very edge of one mountain world, separated by deep precipices from the other that rose beyond the intervening valley. To the right of the road, —far away to the base of a rugged, grey mountain range—stretched a great expanse of broken pasture land that apparently flowed down over the edge of the cup.

A few cows were quietly standing in the olive-green water among the rushes near the road; groups of the same animals were browsing in the hollows, and hundreds more must have been hidden far and near among the trees, for the air was filled with the tinkling of cattle bells, so numerous that they formed a continuous music floating melodiously from across the water, and from distant pastures high up among the folds of the hills. Bethune stopped involuntarily and drew a long breath. The soft grandeur of this peaceful scene, shut out from all the world's turmoil, lifted a weight from his soul, though it was powerless to revive his past joyousness. His back was turned now to the weird Drei Zinnen; there was nothing ominous of evil in the glittering summits of the Cadine Spitzen.

His little guide put his fingers to his mouth and blew a shrill whistle. "There is the empty einspänner gnadige Herr!" he exclaimed, pointing to a distant speck near the end of the lake. "The horses will be tethered further down by the herds-men's huts. The ladies can't be far off."


They walked on faster and faster. Soon the boy had to run to keep up with Bethune's strides. Yes! there they were. On a grassy hummock, shaded by a couple of firs, bent and twisted by winter storms, he could distinguish the group which he sought. Yet, in his great longing to see Edith alone, as he had seen her last at Bellosguardo Bethune stopped for a moment, and would have liked to turn straight back by the way he had come. No doubt they were very happy! He could see a man's form bending over Edith. What an ass he had been, not to remember that surprises were seldom welcome! But it was too late for retreat; the boy whistled again, and the people under the trees had all turned to see what the sound meant. Another minute and he stood amongst his friends, greeted by volleys of joyful exclamations, and inquiries of whence he came, and how he had found



them. "And have you nothing to say to me, old Philip?" said Maynard cheerily. "Don't you wonder why I am here, instead of in my beloved Venice?"

"When one drops from the clouds one can't wonder at anything," replied Bethune; and seating himself by Miss Whitman, he began to talk to her of England, hardly knowing what he said, and answering all her questions *à tort et à travers*. His own friend, Maynard, then, was the companion who had excited Schluderbach gossip! Was this the meeting he had dreamt of for so long, the hope of which had buoyed him up as on wings during his long journey!

He and Edith were within a few paces of each other, yet they were divided by an immeasurable gulf. He tried to smile pleasantly, to talk naturally, yet all the while a tumult raged within him—a fierce struggle between love for Edith and loyalty to his friend. He said to himself that he would watch and wait, and yet he was too fevered by jealousy and doubt to be able to comprehend that which he watched. As for our poor heroine, her heart leapt wildly as Bethune drew near, then



suddenly all her joy died away as she met his cold glance, felt the lifeless touch of his hand. He had come, he had come at last, and yet in an instant she knew that he was a changed man. She longed to rush away, hide herself in the darkest part of the forest, and vent her overwrought sensations in passionate tears. That being impossible, she chatted desperately with Maynard.

Moods being contagious as fevers, Bethune's arrival threw a constraint over the whole party. The little picnic, so gaily begun, ended in almost complete silence. The ball of conversation would not fly—fell flat at every second sentence. Miss Whitman's kind soul was much troubled by Bethune's weary look and unmistakable dejection. She watched and wondered what it all meant. In spite of her acuteness, it never struck her that Bethune could be jealous of young Maynard. Edith remained in a whirl of pained bewilderment. The few words which Bethune from time to time addressed to her were uttered in a cool, sarcastic way that cut her to the quick. Hot blushes crowded to her cheeks as she remembered how



she had yearned for a sight of this man. She could not guess that he was suffering as bitterly as herself. It was a relief to all excepting Maynard (who was less observant of mankind than of mountains) when Mrs. Mortimer jumped up, declaring that the ants were too many for her, and proposed that, since no one would talk or eat more, they had better take a stroll, and go and look at the big building where the cows were housed at night, and pay for the delicious butter with which the herdsman had supplied them.

"You will come with us, won't you, Mr. Bethune?" she added. "I know that our two artists are longing to be left to paint in peace."

So the three elders walked on towards the big *stabilimento*, or stable, in which the herds which feed on these pastures are collected at night. It might be called a cow-cloister, for its appearance is not unlike that of a conventual establishment. The sheds that shelter the cows run round a large octagonal court-yard. Huge gates shut it in, and on either side are the dairies and sleeping accommodation, of the roughest kind, for the herdsmen and their assistants. On the way Bethune chanced

to look back, and had the pleasure of seeing Maynard employed in assisting Edith to set up her easel near the spot where they had dined. The ladies did not find Bethune a talkative companion, and he joined but grudgingly in their raptures over the scenery. Presently, when Miss Whitman turned aside to gather tufts of the coral-red rhododendron growing among the rocks, Mrs. Mortimer took occasion to whisper that she was much disappointed with Bethune.

"Why, my dear, he seemed quite another sort of man when he came to Merton Lodge. Evidently the surmises I made then had no foundation whatever; and I am heartily glad of it, for the young American is far nicer."

Miss Whitman made some vague reply; she did not understand what was going on, and she felt thoroughly angry with Bethune. He had much better have stayed away, she thought, if he had only come to show them how much he had changed. So, instead of trying to draw Bethune out of his gloomy mood, even she, the benevolent fairy-godmother, became curt and almost snappish in manner.

The three stood looking down into the gulf of greenery into which the road abruptly sank beyond the *stabilimento*, without any one of them but Mrs. Mortimer caring to break the silence. She, however, having studied maps and guide-books to good purpose, pointed out to Bethune the screen-like Croda Malcora, a collection of jagged peaks and knife-blades, with odd little pinnacles here and there, like gigantic human figures. The top of the Antelao was capped with clouds, but the Serapis was clear and ashen.

Miss Whitman began moralizing to herself on the queerness of human nature. All this grandeur, she thought, fails to excite this man's admiration, just because he is out of temper, or has something on his mind. . . .

Meanwhile Edith, though too anxious and unhappy to be fit for work, was making one attempt after another to produce a successful sketch. It would have been absurd to do nothing after bringing all her materials with her, yet her hand was trembling too much to perform its duty deftly.

Frank's painting also went on languidly, though from a very different cause. The steep mountain

ride, the hearty dinner, had made him sleepy, though he was ashamed to confess it, and he hummed song after song to keep himself awake, and dabbed at the Drei Zinnen with the air of one engaged on a masterpiece. But soon he threw down his brush with a loud laugh.

"We neither of us seem screwed up to the mark, Mrs. Henderson!" he exclaimed; "you keep shifting about from one point of view to another; and as for me, I guess that splendid butter has gone to my head, for in trying to render the leaning forward effect that is on the mountain now, I am making it look positively tipsy."

Edith tried to echo his laugh, as she lay aside her brushes; all her self-control had not sufficed to steady her hand.

"A jolting ride is not the best preparation for painting," she said, with a fluttering sigh. "I shall give it up and go down to the lake."

"Oh, come now, if you give in, I must too," answered Maynard, glad to find his idleness justified by hers.

Just then some peasant girls came in sight, carrying great bundles of grass upon their heads.

They were dark-eyed and dark-haired, their brown bare feet stepped lightly over the turf: they chattered and smiled.

Maynard gave a shout of delight.

"Look, Mrs. Henderson," he cried, "one can see that we are within the Italian frontier here. What a difference of race between these grandly formed creatures and the stumpy, bleary-eyed womankind who shock one's eyes in the German valleys! These faces know how to smile: the German Tyrolese can only grin. What a pleasure to hear a friendly *Buona sera!* instead of a gruff and guttural *Guten abend!* Oh, I must sketch that tall lithe girl with the coral necklace. She has driven the butter from my brain. I am an artist once more. Don't you feel tempted to try her?"

Edith shook her head. "I feel too prosaic," she said. "Presently I shall fill our kettle at the spring over there among the rocks, make up a fire, and surprise our wandering friends by giving them some tea on their return."

Frank begged her to wait a bit and leave him to fill the kettle, and before long, with the willing

aid of a tall young herdsman, who was hovering near the pretty girl with the necklace, a bright fire was blazing in a sheltered hollow and the kettle singing merrily. Edith busied herself energetically with these preparations; she could not rest, and dared not think what Bethune's changed demeanour might mean. She felt stunned and dazed as by an unexpected blow, and when nothing more remained to be done, when her painting materials were all carefully repacked and arranged, she wandered down to the shore of the lake, vainly trying to revive her previous delight in the lovely scene.

Had Bethune seen her standing there alone in that dejected attitude on the brink of the still green water, his jealous suspicions might have been at once dispelled, but when, a few minutes later, he appeared with the elder ladies, she was laughingly correcting Maynard's blunders in pouring out the tea. The artist presently began to rally Bethune on his want of spirits.

"England has ruined you, old fellow: English fogs are still around you. We shall have to take you up half a dozen mountains," he said, nodding to Edith, as the best pedestrian of the party,

"before we can restore you to a cheerful state of mind."

"Thanks, Maynard," answered Bethune coldly, dropping several superfluous lumps of sugar into his tea, "but I only came to see you, and this happy family, on my way to Cortina, where I have business."

"Cortina!" echoed Miss Whitman, and instantly her thoughts flew to Mrs. Trevelyan. She looked at Edith, whose sad eyes dropped beneath her gaze.

Mrs. Mortimer and Maynard talked so briskly that they hardly noticed the total silence of their three companions.

But now the shadows were lengthening rapidly over the lake. On one side, the mountains glowed with deeper, richer tints; on the other, the ashen grey peaks rising among the snowfields and glaciers had grown ghastlier than before. The irregular song of the cattle-bells grew louder and louder, and soon long strings of cows could be seen emerging from the forest and crossing the wide pasture in the direction of the cloister-like stables.

Mrs. Mortimer started up in a panic. "For

Heaven's sake!" she cried, "let us have the horses put to and get away at once, or we shall be surrounded by these horrible animals. No doubt there are some wild bulls among them."

They were soon ready to start, and Maynard insisted so strongly on yielding his horse to Bethune, that the latter was obliged to accept it against his will. Upon that, Edith persuaded Mrs. Mortimer to exchange the jolting *einspänner* for the saddle, while she herself took the empty place by Miss Whitman.

Perhaps if she had seen Bethune's face when this second change was effected she would have repented of her decision, but her eyes were carefully turned in another direction. Philip's avoidance had stung her pride as well as her heart; it would have been intolerable, she thought, to ride beside him.

The evening clouded in as they jolted down the rough road. All that had looked so bright in the morning seemed gloomy now. A bleak wind whistled through the firs, and made Edith and Miss Whitman shrink closer beneath their wraps. Mrs. Mortimer was too much absorbed in preventing her



horse from falling on its knees to make many attempts to draw her unsociable escort into conversation. Maynard alone strode blithely along, gaily whistling, or shouting some jest to his friends.

As they neared Schluderbach a heavy shower came on, and wet and weary, all scattered to their respective rooms directly they reached the hôtel.

## CHAPTER VII.

“Wer zum ersten Male liebt  
Sei's auch glücklos, ist ein Gott;  
Aber wer zum zweiten Male  
Glücklos liebt, der ist ein Narr.

“Ich ein solcher Narr, ich liebe  
Wieder ohne Gegenliebe!  
Sonne, Mond und Sterne lachen  
Und ich lache mit und sterbe!”

H. HEINE.


HEINE's bitter verses well express the feelings that kept Bethune sleeplessly pacing during half the night the damp little room assigned to him by the hostess. Where were now the bright hopes that had brought him at full speed across the Continent to this Tyrolean valley? Mrs. Mortimer's heedless remarks, added to the gossip of the inn, and thrown into relief by the background of Mrs. Trevelyan's insinuations, convinced him that he had been feeding upon dreams—baseless, impossible dreams.

Still, now and then a faint whisper of common sense suggested that Edith hardly looked like a woman happily wooed and won. Yet Frank's position in the group was certainly that of a suitor. And against this youth, whom he loved with an almost paternal affection, Bethune felt impotent to fight. He had done so much for Maynard, that he deemed it impossible to drop the slightest hint of his own feelings without taking a mean advantage of his unconscious rival. Then his thoughts turned almost savagely upon poor Miss Whitman. "She is keen-sighted enough; she might surely have prepared me for what was coming," he exclaimed bitterly, totally forgetting that he had never laid bare his heart to that lady, never even answered her and Edith's letters, telling him of their proposed tour. Who is at times so thoroughly unreasonable as the reasonable man who seldom loses his self-control? His old ill-fortune, he thought, would pursue him to the end. Every hope of personal happiness must be put aside. His message given to Mrs. Trevelyan, he would go to Florence, collect his possessions, and then turn his back upon Italy for ever.

And meanwhile, only materially divided from the man she loved by two doors and a narrow passage, our heroine lay tossing about on her narrow bed, choking back the sobs that sought a vent, for fear that Miss Whitman might hear them through the slender partition, and hurry in to offer un-availing comfort.

To natures like Edith's pity adds another pang to suffering. She despised herself so completely that she thought herself worthy only of others' contempt. Her heart prompted her to seek on the morrow an explanation of the dark cloud that had arisen between Bethune and herself. She longed to ask this once kind friend what she had done to offend him, what it was that ailed him; but pride crushed down this impulse almost as soon as it arose.

What explanation was needed? He was going to Mrs. Trevelyan, her enemy; how, then, could any friendship continue to exist between herself and him? No one should ever suspect her suffering. She told herself that her art, her friends, should suffice her; that she could live down this as she had lived down other troubles. Loneliness was her fate; let her clasp it then, nor more resist it.



Worn out at last, she fell asleep, to go through her fight again in feverish dreams. When she joined her friends at the breakfast-table the next morning, pale cheeks and heavy eyes were easily ascribed to the fatigues of the preceding day.

"Let me prescribe a remedy," cried Maynard, flourishing the coffee pot; "*similia similibus*, you know: we must not let Bethune go down to Cortina without showing him Peutelstein. He can go on from thence, and we might take advantage of this clear day to get a sketch of the Pelmo."

Edith put her head out of window and scanned the bright sky.

"You are right," she said; "indeed we ought not to miss this chance of painting the Pelmo. Our weather-wise landlord warns us that the season will soon break up."

To Bethune's jealous ears, Frank's easy way of making plans for himself and Edith could have but one interpretation. He never remembered the *camaraderie* begotten of their common pursuit. He had just come into the room in time to hear the proposal made, and he looked as pale as Edith herself.

"Is it true that you leave us to-day?" asked Miss Whitman in a low voice, as she made room for him beside her on the bench.

"Quite true: it is business, not pleasure, that takes me to Cortina," he answered, his manner thawing for a moment, as he met the glance of the kind eyes fixed so seriously upon him.

"Cannot you return here afterwards?" she continued.

"No," he said briefly; "that is impossible."

The lady said no more; she was puzzled and disgusted.

No conveyances being obtainable earlier, they did not start for Peutelstein till after an early dinner. Edith took care to keep out of the way all the morning, seeing which, Bethune went off on a solitary stroll, and was found later by Mrs. Mortimer throwing stones into the stream in a vacant and dejected manner.

When the carriages came to the door, Miss Whitman excused herself from joining the party on the score of fatigue. But if she hoped that her absence would cause Bethune and Edith to pair off in one *einspänner*, Mrs. Mortimer and the artist

in the other, her calculation failed. Edith told Bethune cheerfully that she was sure that he and Maynard must have a hundred things to talk about, and that she was going to take care of Mrs. Mortimer.

In the old days Bethune would have protested against so ungallant an arrangement. Now, he acquiesced with a polite bow. Edith's manner to him this morning, if apparently easy, was as icy as though she had a bit of yonder blue glacier for a cuirass.

As they drove along Bethune made one or two attempts to draw Frank into confidential conversation. He dreaded receiving spoken confirmation of his fears, and yet naturally, if inconsistently, he was aggrieved by his friend's lack of openness on so important a point. He thought that perhaps Maynard held his tongue because he suspected how matters stood with him.

Accordingly, it was with extreme circumlocution that the self-tormented man brought Edith's name into the conversation, and each time he had his trouble for his pains.

The road from Schluderbach to Cortina presents

a series of mountain pictures of the grandest kind, and the artist was continually on the alert to draw his friend's attention to every peak, and make him enjoy every point of view. He also profoundly disapproved of Bethune's visit to Cortina. Knowing nothing of its real object, he concluded that Bethune was going to hover about the siren in the same way as in Florence.

Now, Maynard had no pretensions to austerity, but he had heard so much from the *capo politico* of the scandalous doings of the Russian princess and her party at the Golden Star in Cortina, that he would have deemed it an insult to the ladies at Schluderbach to leave them for the purpose of renewing his acquaintance with Mrs. Trevelyan.

There was a sterling purity about this young New Englander that justified his popularity with the best of the other sex. So, as he could not approve of his friend's doings, it was altogether safer and pleasanter to give vent to artistic enthusiasm over the scenery than to let their talk drift to personal matters.

Old Phil evidently wanted cheering up, he thought. It never entered his imagination, much




less his thoughts, that Mrs. Henderson and himself could be in any way connected with his friend's dejection.

Never was man less disposed than Bethune to worship Nature during that drive. The chaise in front, over the top of which he had an occasional glimpse of fair hair, surmounted by a little hat with a waving plume, was an object far more engrossing than any mountain whatsoever. Yet he found himself compelled to listen to all Frank's raptures over the great red Dolomite, the Roth Wand, whose mighty precipices, scarred and riven and bloodstained, rise so grandly into view beyond Schluderbach.

Frank knew all the theories about the geological structure of the Dolomites, had original views of his own upon the subject, and was mournfully eloquent upon the "bad lighting" of the Roth Wand.

"Isn't it hard, old fellow, that one never gets a sunset effect upon it that is worth having? The early morning is the only time to study it with advantage, and, would you believe it, every time I have got up on purpose to accomplish a sunrise, provoking mists have covered the summit!"



Soon they reached the highest point of the pass, and then a new world of peaks opened before them. A lonely cottage stood on an open space of heath, with a background of dark woods at the foot of the Red Mountain. On the left were sunny glades of flower-besprinkled turf. Groups of cattle were moving about among the trees; waterfalls seamed the flanks of the Cristallo range.

Behind them Schluderbach and the mountains to the north were shrouded by gloomy storm clouds, but in front of them was summer—glowing Italian summer. The three summits of snow-capped Tofana were all visible now, flanked by a ghastly grey slope, a causeway for giant footsteps.

Further on, rows of jagged tusks seemed trying to pierce the sky, and over all floated the soft blue transparent haze that always tells of Italy. Now the road plunged down amid majestic firs, with spreading branches springing almost from their roots, and nearly all were festooned with grey-beard moss. Sparkling rivulets cut merrily through the turf, bounding onwards like eager children gladly leaving their mountain homes for the unknown world below.

Playful enough just now these summer brooklets, but ere long to be converted by autumn rains into fierce torrents, laying waste all that opposes their course. Soon the valley narrows; grey and orange rocks shut in on either side streamlets, woods, and road.

And all the time Frank ceaselessly poured interesting information into his friend's unwilling ear.

Bethune's replies grew shorter and shorter. What unconscionable egotists are these artists, thought he; this Maynard has gained the greatest prize a man may hope to attain, and yet he can only prate like a guide-book! Just then, Frank pointed out another mountain. Bethune, absorbed in his own reflections, answered mechanically that it was fine.

"Fine!" echoed Maynard, with a snort of disgust. "Do look again, my dear fellow! Why, it is thoroughly bad in line, and would not compose at all."

"Good God!" exclaimed Bethune, with sudden energy; "you men of the new school want to measure Nature by your mahl-sticks, and make

her match your own particular palette. I hope you haven't infected Mrs. Henderson with your heresies!"


Frank stared at his friend in blank amazement. "I had already explained to you my theory of mountain lines," he said, in a tone of wounded dignity.

Altogether the drive was not a success, and both were glad when, having climbed the ascent beyond the bridge and barrack-like inn of Ospe-dale, they drew near the Peutelstein crags, and leaving the chaise, made their way through the high grass towards the ruins.

The ladies had been the first to arrive, and when Bethune saw Edith climbing the hill, laden with easel and paint-box, he dashed forward to relieve her of her load, leaving Maynard absorbed in collecting his own paraphernalia. And, standing by Edith's side on one of the ruined walls, Bethune suddenly became alive to the grandeur of the view.

At their feet lay the wide valley of Cortina; but it was impossible, at first, to have eyes for the neat white town with its tall Italian Campanile, and the substantial homesteads scattered over the

sunny fields, or even to watch the zig-zag course of the dancing waters of the Bojta. How look down on these homely details of the scene, when before them rose the marvellous mountain coronal that surrounds Cortina? The mighty Tofana to the right, great Mount Antelao and the Croda Malcora to the left, while straight in front of them the magnificent Pelmo leaned grandly up towards the sky. The gifted author of "Untrodden Peaks," has likened this mountain to a mighty throne; but certainly, when seen from Peutelstein, it may be compared to a huge, inaccessible Acropolis. Beside it, and separated from it by a ravine so narrow that at this distance it appears a mere fissure, the crags of the Becco di Mezzodì shoot daringly upwards. Then come the tusks and peaks and battlements of the Rocchetta, and all around a world of unknown peaks of strangest forms. As for the colouring, it defied description, so manifold, so tender, so fleeting were the tints. Lower down a belt of dark fir forest lay like a votive garland at the base of the Dolomites, and beneath, guarded by an occasional bluff or a wooded promontory, came the undulating basin of corn and pasture land.



Emerson tells us that "Nature is the true idealist. When she serves us best, when, on rare days, she speaks to the imagination, we feel that the huge heaven and earth are but a web drawn around us, that the light, skies, and mountains are but the painted vicissitudes of the soul." This is a great truth; hence the exalted enthusiasm excited by noble scenery. Edith's ice-armour melted away as she surveyed the wondrous scene. She stood with folded hands, her lips parted in almost reverential joy, her eyes roving eagerly from one detail to another. Bethune, too, shook off his sullenness. Jealous certainties changed to misty doubts, momentarily fainter, and for the first time since they had parted in Florence at the gate of Edith's studio, these two spoke to each other unconstrainedly. They found plenty to say. With keen pleasure they pointed out to each other each portion of the fantastic panorama, but always turned again to the Pelmo as its grandest feature. The Antelao they likened to a Bedouin chief, for the huge slope was covered with snow as with a white burnouse, which fell away where a dark profile of rock projected over the valley.

"See!" exclaimed Edith gaily; "does it not seem to be the guardian genius of this sunlit valley, with one arm raised as though to shield it from evil?"

"Or ready to hurl down avalanches of stones when the mood changes," replied Bethune. "Look at those enormous boulders scattered about below. What tales they tell of storm and devastation!"

"You are always inclined to take a gloomy view of things, Mr. Bethune," answered his companion. "Who can think of winter storms with this glorious light shining over our summer world? Here we breathe an Italian atmosphere, and have left all tempests behind us in the north."

And Bethune, gazing on the light in her eyes, felt no disposition to contradict her.

But now Mrs. Mortimer, who always did her sight-seeing conscientiously, called to them to come up to the summit of the hill and look at the fragments of walls that alone remain of the stout old Venetian stronghold. Among these ruins they found Maynard ready for work, his scientific easel already planted and accurately screwed to the required angle.

But the view of her favourite Pelmo from this spot did not content Edith, so, leaving Mrs. Mortimer comfortably ensconced against a rock, with a Tauchnitz novel in her lap, she scrambled down to a projecting ledge among the trees beneath the highest crag, which, as a previous visit had shown her, was really the best point of view for the Pelmo. Of course, Bethune accompanied her: it would have been impossible to let her drag her camp-stool, easel, etc., down that steep path unaided.

"You have shown me none of your new sketches, Mrs. Henderson," he said presently, in a slightly injured tone.

"How could I tell that you wished to see them?" answered Edith, quietly proceeding to set her palette.

"Surely you know what deep interest I feel in your progress?" he said awkwardly, and bent down to fix one of the spikes of her easel more firmly in the ground.

"You seemed absorbed by new interests," she said with simple directness; "and as you do not return with us to Schluderbach, I am afraid that you must wait to see my performances until we are all in Florence again."




"New interests!" he exclaimed. "Nay, rather I might make that remark of yourself."

"I don't understand," she said, looking up at him questioningly. "No new interests have arisen for me."

Bethune looked at her intently, anxiously, but made no reply. She seemed so thoroughly unconscious of his real meaning, that his heart began to beat wildly—his last doubts to float away as fast as yonder mists across the Pelmo. But a long habit of indecision and self-distrust is not easily conquered. Edith's eyes were fixed alternately upon her canvas and the mountain she was so carefully sketching. She seemed serenely absorbed in her work; and again Bethune's courage failed him.

How was he to know that her present calm was the result of the fierce battle she had fought with herself during the past night? She could not forget for a moment that this man, for all his present friendliness, was about to go straight from her presence to that of Mrs. Trevelyan. This thought predominated over every other; she fancied that it sufficed to stamp out every other feeling.



So neither spoke. Edith looked at her work, Bethune looked at her.

But soon this silence became embarrassing. Edith began to wish that her companion would go away to the others, or take up a book or a pencil, or walk about, or do anything, in short, rather than sit there silently by her side. Well, she would try and forget the oppressive presence. So, setting her lips tight, she worked away doggedly at her Pelmo for more than an hour. But now, as afternoon drew towards evening, wonderful effects came flitting over the peaks. The Rocchetta, and the lower range in front of it were now in blackest shadow, but the sky beyond the Pelmo's summit had refined to that soft, sheeny yellowish tint, which so often succeeds a sultry day in Italy. The Becco di Mezzodi and the Pic del Lago soared up against this translucent background, their own colour changed from faintest grey to a warm, dark mouse-tint. One tiny gossamer cloud alone floated over the highest pinnacle. The slanting plateau beyond the Pic del Lago was just beginning to be touched by rosy gleams.

Edith dropped her brushes.

"My colouring is all wrong now," she exclaimed mournfully. "What shall I do?"

Bethune, who just then was staring thoughtfully down into a flashing emerald pool of the Bojta far beneath—a fact which gave Edith courage to address him—roused himself at her appeal, and looked attentively at her work.

"Put this sketch aside altogether," he said decisively; "it is very good, and it is too late to change it now. You had already drawn in the mountain on that other canvas; use that to get this evening effect."

Edith instantly followed his advice, and in a few minutes had dashed in a spirited rendering of the already changing glow.

"How you love your art!" exclaimed Bethune. "I envy you your ardour."

"It is my all," she replied impulsively.

"That depends upon yourself," said Bethune, in a low earnest tone that was almost a whisper.

Edith's pride took fire. Empty compliments from Bethune were more than she could bear; and what but empty compliments were words spoken by a man on his way to Mrs. Trevelyan?

To get away from this dangerous ground, she suddenly asked Bethune if he did not find Maynard wonderfully improved in health.

He started as though she had thrown a stone at him.

"Wonderfully!" he repeated sarcastically. "No; the improvement is perfectly natural under the circumstances."

"Ah," said Edith gaily, "then you know all about it! I thought that Mr. Frank could never keep his love story a secret from you, although he did beg me so earnestly to mention it to no one."

Bethune strode to the other end of the rocky ledge, then, turning sharply round, said in a strange husky voice—

"He had no right to bind you to secrecy. What was his motive?"

Edith fixed large surprised eyes on Bethune's disturbed face.

"His motive is plain enough," she said; "he would not like the news to reach the ears of Miss Rowland's many friends before her father's formal consent has arrived."

"What, Miss Rowland! Do you mean to say that Maynard is to marry Miss Rowland?" exclaimed Bethune in a very different tone.

"Of course," replied Edith; "didn't you know? Then you have cheated the secret from me shamefully. I thought he had told you. Oh, please try and forget my indiscretion, and don't say a word to him about it."

"Forget it!—I bless it!" exclaimed Bethune, speaking very fast and joyously. "I was never so delighted in my life. Thank you for telling me, Mrs. Henderson."

He took her hand in his and pressed it to his lips.

At that instant there was a slight rustling in the branches overhead; one or two bits of earth came rattling down, and made both look up. Nothing was to be seen, but Edith hastily withdrew her hand. The slight noise had startled her to a most unusual degree.

"You don't know what a load you have lifted from my mind," continued Bethune. "I thought—I thought—— Will you let me tell you what I thought?"

It was Edith's turn to look disturbed now, for Bethune had seized her hand again, and was covering it with hot kisses. What did it all mean?

No rosier beams glowed over the Pelmo than the flushes crowding into her cheeks and brow. Her breath became short; she was on the point of bursting into tears.

"May I tell you, Edith?" repeated Bethune in beseeching tones.

Then, all of a sudden, Edith snatched away her hand, drew herself up to her full height, and choking back her emotion, she asked in iciest tones, "Will you not be rather late for your appointment at Cortina this afternoon, Mr. Bethune?"

But Bethune met her cold gaze unflinchingly, looked at her flushed face, and could have laughed for joy.


"You haven't answered my question yet," he said, very gently; "but I'll answer yours. My business with the lady at Cortina can be settled in half an hour. Either she accepts or rejects her husband's terms. I have only to lay them before her, as Major Trevelyan's messenger. It depends upon you, you alone, Edith, whether I return or

not to Schluderbach. I have so much to say to you, dear, if you will only consent to hear me."

They were standing thus—he again imprisoning her right hand, gazing eagerly into her face, and only waiting for permission to clasp her in his arms; she trembling, uncertain, tearful, with downcast eyes—when all at once they were startled by a loud coarse laugh above their heads. Starting asunder they looked up. From the same opening in the bushes at the edge of the overhanging rock from whence the former rustling had proceeded, they now saw a dark-bearded face, surmounted by a Tyrolean hat, grinning down upon them. As soon as he caught their indignant eyes he exclaimed, "*Wunderschön! Himmlisch!*" kissed his hand mockingly, and disappeared.

Bethune turned white with rage. "That brute wants a lesson!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Wait here a minute, dear Mrs. Henderson."

He dashed up the narrow path through the thicket, but it was some little distance to the top of the rock, and by the time he reached it the delinquent was nowhere to be seen. Still breathless with rage, he ran down the hill to the road,



where the chaises were waiting, and asked the drivers if they had seen such a man pass. It needed some repetition to hammer his meaning into the sleepy men's slow wits, but at last he learnt from one of them that two ladies had just driven away with a gentleman in Tyrolese dress.

The ladies had sent the Herr back up the hill for something or other, had waited for him in the carriage, and driven away the instant he returned. "They were in a carriage from the Golden Star at Cortina ; and one can hear them laughing still," added the younger and less stolid *knecht*.

And Bethune, hurrying back to Edith, fancied that he could hear a coarse ho ! ho ! echoing up the ravine. His golden moment was gone. Returning to the ledge, he found Mrs. Mortimer fidgeting round Edith, and begging her to make haste and put up her painting things. Maynard, too, was there, exhibiting his own afternoon's work, and criticising Edith's, which, indeed, had not been finished as carefully as it had been begun.

Edith seemed to find it very difficult to rearrange her colour-box ; the task completely absorbed her.



"I say, Philip, have you fallen in with your friend Mrs. Trevelyan?" asked Maynard. "I do believe she was one of the party I saw poking about among the ruins."

"Not friends of Mr. Bethune's, surely!" exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer; "those persons looked extremely bad style."

"If it was Mrs. Trevelyan, I wish I had seen her," said Bethune sternly; "it would have saved me from going to Cortina."

"Then you've changed your mind and mean to come right back, old friend. I'm heartily glad of it!" exclaimed Maynard cheerfully.

Bethune gripped his hand with a warmth he had not recently shown towards the artist.

"I hope so, I hope so," he said. "I want to come back."

As he assisted Edith to mount the narrow step of the *einspänner* he whispered, "Do you give me leave to return?"

Edith's reply was not very distinct, but it did not sound like "No!"

## CHAPTER VIII.


"Lord, how this world is given to lying!"

SHAKESPEARE.

ON reaching Cortina, Bethune did not go at once to the inn where Mrs. Trevelyan and her party were to be found. Brain and heart were in a turmoil, and it was hard to have to turn his thoughts from Edith, and all the divine possibilities of which she was the centre, to the painful affairs of the Trevel-yans. It was characteristic of the man, this Quixotic sentiment of duty, which impelled him to keep to his resolve of fulfilling his difficult mission before securing his own happiness. Many in his place would have contented themselves with simply forwarding the Major's ultimatum to his wife; but Bethune was persuaded that if left to herself the foolish woman would recklessly throw away her

last chance of respectability. His conscience would not let him leave the love of his youth to abide by the consequences of her own errors. He determined to save her in spite of herself. That task once done he could fly back to Edith's feet.

Occupied with these thoughts, he mechanically swallowed the dinner placed before him by the dark-eyed mistress of the inn, and replied in the briefest monosyllables to the remarks made to him from time to time by three individuals who were discussing the public and private affairs of Cortina over their pipes at the head of the long table. One of these personages, a tall, stout, loud-speaking man, with an immense crop of grizzled hair, whom his companions and the hostess addressed with deference, seemed to consider stray travellers his legitimate prey. At last, seeing Bethune's unwillingness to volunteer an account of himself, he whispered a few words to the hostess. She left the room, but speedily returned with a dog's-eared travellers' book, in which she politely begged Bethune to inscribe his name and nationality; no sooner had he done so, than he had the pleasure of seeing the volume carried to the head



of the table, and his entry calmly inspected by the inquisitive smokers.

“He, he!—I was right, sir!” exclaimed the fat gentleman, in nowise abashed by meeting Bethune’s amused glance. “I pride myself on always guessing correctly. The English are a great nation, and do much good to Cortina. They also bring some life into it, for which I may well be thankful, since my position as *capo politico* compels me to dwell here all the year round. Many pleasant hours have I passed with English people in this very room, sir. And then your young ladies, what undaunted mountaineers! I admire them from my soul. I often drop in on Sundays at Ghedina’s hotel when your English mass is being performed, and then I admire your national patience. A religious function that lasts over two hours! There sit all the pretty misses, who have perhaps been up the Pelmo the day before, as still as statues, with fixed serious eyes, as demure as though they had not an idea in their neat little heads. Oh, it is highly interesting to watch them! I like to drop in at that time.”

Here the worthy magistrate stopped to take

breath, took a long pull at his pipe, and finding that Bethune made no reply, pursued the conversation unassisted.

“I see, sir, that you came last from Schluderbach. Pray can you tell me if the charming English ladies I saw there a week ago are still in the hotel? There are three of them: a handsome showy lady who talks most interestingly, a short dark lady, and a tall slender one, much younger, and with the air of a goddess?”

In reply to this direct question, Bethune admitted that he knew these ladies, whereupon the *capo politico's* tongue wagged faster than before, while his two friends acted the part of chorus, chiming in at regular intervals.


Now re-appeared the pretty hostess, and of her Bethune inquired the whereabouts of the Golden Star. He had only to go down the street to the Piazza, she said, and he would see the inn straight in front of him.

“The Golden Star!” echoed the *capo politico* blandly. “Ha! countrymen of yours are often to be found there. Indeed, at this moment there is a lady there, whom, with all my penetration, I should

not have guessed to be English. But the mistake was natural. You will allow, sir, that it is unusual to find a party composed of a Russian princess, an English lady, a German baron, and an Italian naval officer. I can forgive myself for supposing the little blonde to be also a native of Russia."

Bethune's face showed his annoyance. He had no intention of discussing Mrs. Trevelyan's character with the gossips of Cortina. Rising hastily from the table, and with a distant bow to the garrulous representative of Austrian rule, he hurried down the rickety wooden stairs, and walked out into the quiet shadowy street, and past the tall Campanile on to the moonlit Piazza. From the open windows of the Golden Star resounded loud voices and peals of laughter, amongst which was plainly to be distinguished the coarse "ho! ho!" that had aroused Bethune's indignation on the Peutelstein rock.

A trim woman in the costume of the district came forward as he entered the inn doorway, and on his inquiring for Mrs. Trevelyan, told him that she was at supper with her friends.



Giving his card, he was shown into an empty bedroom—sitting-rooms are scarce luxuries in Tyrol—and was presently told that the lady would come to him in a few minutes, unless he preferred joining the party at table.

Throwing open the casement of the stuffy little room, Bethune lit a cigar, and had plenty of time to smoke it out and watch the moonlight effects on the little Piazza and glimpses of mountain tops beyond the roofs, before Mrs. Trevelyan came to him.

At last she fluttered into the room, both hands outstretched in effusive welcome, and exclaiming—

“Naughty, unsociable man, why would you not come to be introduced to my friends? They would be charmed to know you.”

“The pleasure might not be mutual,” said Bethune briefly, as he took one only of the offered hands. “I have serious matters to speak of, Mrs. Trevelyan, and I presume you would hardly like to discuss private business before these new companions you have picked up?”

“Always serious,” remarked the lady, affectedly

shaking her head, and with one of the well-worn siren smiles that were so entirely thrown away upon her present hearer.

"Now, tell me, bad man, why you never answered my letters from Germany? You have no idea what straits I was in."

"You have had my letter and enclosure from London?"

"Oh yes, thanks!" she answered carelessly; "it is charming to have so obliging a banker, but why did you add so wearisome a description of Major Trevelyan's numerous ailments? Do you imagine that I feel any interest in his condition?"

"Have you no scrap of womanly feeling left?" asked Bethune angrily. "Can you forget that you have ruined your husband's life, as well as that of others."

"Dear me!" said the lady, with a spiteful gleam in her cold blue eyes; "so you want me to believe that you're come all the way from London to preach a sort of missionary sermon in Major Trevelyan's favour. Why, I try to forget his very existence: my friends here are not aware that I possess such an article as a husband. Please don't



mention the fact when I introduce you to them presently."


Bethune looked at the lady with silent amazement. At a distance from her, he constantly tried to put the most indulgent construction on her behaviour, so her cold cynicism always had the power of surprising him afresh.

"You may find it necessary to mention the fact yourself," he said coldly. "What will you say when I tell you that I come to see you on a special mission from your husband, who desires——"

"Not a reconciliation, I hope?" interrupted Mrs. Trevelyan with a mocking laugh.

"It rests with yourself to bring that about," replied Bethune very gravely. "Read this letter attentively, and try for once in your life to take a serious view of your position."

So saying, he handed the lady her husband's ultimatum, placed a chair for her near the table, on which flared a solitary candle, and then withdrew again to the window, no longer, however, to watch the moonlit Piazza. His eyes were sorrowfully fixed on Mrs. Trevelyan, on whose astonished face an angry flush shone through her



artificial colouring as she took in the sense of her husband's missive.

Hot tears of rage blurred her cheeks as she read its concluding lines. She crushed it in her hand, then furiously threw it down, and starting to her feet, exclaimed—

“This, then, is a proof of your friendship, Philip Bethune? Your influence has brought this about. I am either to starve like a beggar in the street, or bury myself alive in a mouldy Lincolnshire village. And you dare to speak of Major Trevelyan's consideration—to hold out hopes of reconciliation!” Her voice rang with concentrated bitterness, as, stamping her feet, she continued, “You, who call yourself my friend—you, *you* bring this letter? Do you think it was all my fault if I left my husband? Have you ever thought what it was for a woman to be tied for life to a man she despised?—a man who, after the first few months, left his young wife to go her own way, without even holding out a helping hand; a man who for years cared not what she did, provided she left him to pursue his own vices unmolested, and who at last turned upon her in drunken

fury because, forsooth, she had too much spirit not to revenge herself for his neglect ! ”

Bethune thought of another neglected wife—of the dignity with which she had suffered ; but Edith Henderson’s name was too sacred to be brought into a discussion with this furious woman. He picked up the crumpled letter, smoothed it, and said calmly, “ Please glance at this again. I think you will see that your husband allows that you also have something to forgive. Read this passage.”

But she dashed it aside. “ What do a few words signify ? ” she asked with bitter contempt. “ Major Trevelyan was always clever at cajolery, or I should never have been his wife. I should have done better to marry you, Philip, shouldn’t I ? ”

Bethune made no answer. His old love, her old treachery, rose vividly before him.

She laughed sneeringly. “ Of course, now you thank heaven that I did throw you over ; and, upon my word, it was all your own fault. You made such a fool of yourself, that there was no resisting the temptation to trample on you. You and your Mrs. Henderson will be well matched. I thought so to-day when I peeped down upon you from

among the bushes at Peutelstein. I nearly died of laughing."

Bethune bit his lips. It was hard work to control his indignation; but he said, with apparent calm—

"Then I presume we were indebted to you, Mrs. Trevelyan, for the apparition of the person in a Tyrolese hat? Well, I can settle with that gentleman afterwards. Meanwhile, I must beg you to be kind enough to fix your attention on the point in question. What reply shall you send your husband?"

It is a dreadful moment for women of Mrs. Trevelyan's order when they recognize that they have lost all power over men who were once their slaves. The resource of tears alone remained. She knew Bethune's weak side. So, bursting into hysterical sobs, she buried her face in her hands, and rocked herself to and fro. "Oh, I am so miserable!" she wailed. "What shall I do—what shall I do? I wish I could die!"

Bethune walked up and down the little room. The sobs increased in violence. He could not stand them long. "Listen, Laura," he said,

going near her and speaking in a far gentler tone than he had yet used. "Try to compose yourself, and listen to what I have to say."

The sobs diminished in violence. He was allowed to take one of the hands covering the tear-blurred face. They were real tears, if selfish ones, and had traced piteous little channels on the painted cheeks.

Then softly, as though speaking to a sick child, this compassionate man related, with some considerate omissions, his conversation with Major Trevelyan. He enlarged upon the latter's broken health, his evident desire to be at peace with his wife; he spoke of the dangers of her present position, the utter misery she would be in if she refused her husband's conditions. The sobs ceased entirely; Mrs. Trevelyan listened with keen attention.

"And you say he looks very ill?" she asked eagerly.

"Miserably ill; he is a perfect wreck! Believe me, the way is open to you to atone for the past. Accept the terms, go to England, and if you wish to do a good deed by giving your husband wifely

care, I think I may assure you that you need fear no repulse."

Once more Mrs. Trevelyan buried her face in her hands. Bethune gave her credit for being overcome by emotion; in reality she was hiding her joy. Her husband then was almost a dying man! A few months, perhaps, of feigned submission, of deceit, and she might be a widow, a real widow, and rich enough to lead the sort of life she liked. Her decision was made. Raising her head, she looked at Bethune with mournfully resigned eyes, and holding out her hand, said in her most pathetic accents, "You are right, my friend, you are always right. Forget all the wild, cruel words that I said just now. The path of duty is clear. I will return to England at once. If Major Trevelyan wants me, I will go to him."

Bethune raised her hand to his lips, his eyes were moist, and his voice trembled as he said, "Thank God, Laura, you are saved at last!" Just then the door behind them burst noisily open, and the tall form of the German baron appeared on the threshold exclaiming, "Liebe Laura, haven't you done yet with your *homme d'affaires*? The princess is waiting to begin her game."

Bethune started up angrily, and turning round, found himself face to face with the grinning man of Peutelstein. Mrs. Trevelyan looked imploringly from one to the other, and stammered out a few words of introduction. A dangerous expression came over Bethune's pale face; the baron's colour changed from brick-dust to purple. "Your friend seems to have a habit of taking ladies' hands, ho! ho!" said the latter sneeringly to Mrs. Trevelyan.

"And you, sir," said Bethune hotly, "have a habit of unseemly laughter which may lead to unpleasant consequences. You took to your heels too quickly this afternoon, or I would have expressed my opinion then."

"*Gott in Himmel!*" thundered the baron. "Do you know that you are speaking to a Prussian officer, sir? You may thank this lady if I do not kick downstairs her too insolent business man!"

Bethune slowly looked the baron down from top to toe, deliberately drew out his card-case, handed the irate German a card, and said formally, "I shall remain at the White Cross, and quite at your service until to-morrow morning, but meanwhile, allow me to correct a little misapprehension.

I am not this lady's man of business, but her friend, and the friend of her husband, Major Trevelyan, of the —th, who is now awaiting her in London."

The baron's face was a study as Bethune uttered these words. He glanced from one to the other in speechless astonishment and rage. Mrs. Trevelyan had turned as pale as the moonlight, and was trembling in every limb.

"Good-night, Mrs. Trevelyan!" said Bethune easily. "We can finish our conversation, and make arrangements for your journey to-morrow morning. Meanwhile, your friend knows where to find me if he has anything to say."

And quietly drawing on his gloves, he took his hat, and taking no further notice of the baron, deliberately walked out of the room. The baron looked after him with dull amazement, then, bringing his fist heavily down upon the table, he turned savagely on Mrs. Trevelyan. She had shrunk into a chair and was covering her face with her hands.

"What!—what was it that man said?" he sputtered. "You have a husband!—a living



husband! How dared you make such a fool of me? Tell me that, I say!"

But Mrs. Trevelyan had no intention of going through a scene with her deceived adorer: there was nothing to be gained by it. Luckily, the door was open, and, instead of replying, she darted quickly through it and up the stairs to the comparative safety of her own room.

## CHAPTER IX.

"I do perceive here a divided duty."

SHAKESPEARE.

It is curious how, at certain crises of our lives, we seem gifted with a species of double identity. While experiencing a whirlwind of emotion, we are able at the same time to observe, analyse, and wonder at our own excitement from a dispassionate, outside point of view.

So it was with Bethune, as he vainly strove to rest in his room at Cortina. That he, the quiet man of letters, should have actually challenged a German baron, was the last event he should have expected to happen to him. By no means apt to yield to fiery impulses, his indignation had this time thoroughly mastered him, and here he was with the imminent prospect of a duel staring him in the face. It would have been too ridiculous

had it not been so extremely vexatious. Impossible now to hurry back to Schluderbach: he could only await the course of events. Not that he at all repented of his act: he would have done it again in cold blood, but now all the possible consequences crowded upon his mind. Of personal danger he never thought; it was the notoriety—the inevitable coupling of his name with that of Mrs. Trevelyan that filled him with disgust. Whatever the issue of the duel, the world, and worse than all, Edith, would suppose that it had been fought for the siren's *beaux yeux*. Pfah! it was too horrible!

He devoted part of the night to writing a long explanatory letter to Edith, enclosed in one to Maynard, ready to be sent off the instant any one appeared on behalf of the baron. He also wrote to the major, and then, worn out with fatigue, threw himself upon the bed and fell into a heavy slumber just as the bells of the Campanile were ringing for matins.

A couple of hours later he was awakened by repeated knocks at his door. A card was brought him, and the intelligence that the bearer, an Italian

gentleman, was waiting to see him below. Throwing on his clothes he hurried down into the public room, where he found a slight, mild-eyed man, got up in correct English style, leisurely walking to and fro.

Ceremonious bows passed between them. Bethune offered his visitor a chair, and said in Italian—

“It is hardly necessary for me to inquire the object of your visit, Captain ——. ‘Of course, you come from the baron at the Golden Star: I am quite at his service.’”

The captain smiled languidly.

“You are right, signor,” he replied, speaking with a slight lisp, and slurring his *r*’s in the way affected of late years by northern Italians of the fashionable world. “I do come from the baron, but not precisely with the object you anticipate. Allow me to put a very irregular question. Are you extremely anxious to meet my friend?”

Bethune stared at the speaker, and then shrugged his shoulders with a smile. “I have never fought a duel in my life,” he said frankly, “never expected to fight one; but when, as in this

case, a quarrel is forced upon me, I am ready to go through with it to the end."

"Exactly! I comprehend," answered the gentleman, with a friendly inclination of the head. "Now, let me state that all that occurred took place under a misapprehension, for which a lady is responsible. Will you kindly read this letter? It will show you how matters stand, and let me add, that if, after reading it, your determination remains unaltered, I shall be most happy to arrange preliminaries with any friend you may please to appoint. The baron is a man of honour, and has given undoubted proofs of courage in the many campaigns in which he has served his country. But for that fact I should not have consented to be the bearer of this letter."

Bethune opened the offered sheet. It was covered with sprawling characters, and gritty with drying sand.

It contained not only an apology for the writer's insulting language to Bethune, but, further, an explanation of his conduct at Peutelstein. Mrs. Trevelyan had told him that a pair of rustic lovers were courting below the ruins, and had begged him,


as a joke, to startle them by sudden exclamations. The lady's word was law to him, and, being short-sighted, it was only when they looked up that he saw that he had been deceived. The revelation that Mrs. Trevelyan was a married woman had been an overwhelming blow. Believing her a widow, he had offered her his hand, and she had led him to believe that his suit would be successful. Disgust at her treachery disinclined him to follow up a quarrel brought about by her folly. But should Mr. Bethune not consider his honour satisfied by this explanation, he, the baron, was ready to meet him at any time or place.

A rush of joy filled Bethune's heart as he calmly refolded the letter. Now he was free to return to Schluderbach.

He held out his hand to the Italian, who, leaning on his arms over the back of a chair, had been watching him in an unimpassioned, indifferent way, all the time that he had been deciphering the German's scrawl.

"I am quite satisfied," said Bethune quietly. "The baron is a gentleman, after all, and I accept his apology."

Captain — rose from his chair, and flicking the ash from the end of his long Virginian cigar, said, in languid accents and with a more pronounced lisp than before: "It is very pleasant to have to do with gentlemen of your country. They are so thoroughly sensible. I have been myself in dozens of duels—generally as principal—and in nearly every case a little common sense might have settled the dispute amicably. Unfortunately, many of my countrymen have foolish traditions that prevent the exercise of common sense. When the baron applied to me about this little affair I said to myself, 'Here we have a Prussian and an Englishman, both northerners; let us try the effect of common sense!' Out of mere curiosity, you know; it did not matter to me which way the thing ended. I sat up all night talking to the baron, and pointed out to him the folly of killing you, or being killed himself, just to please the vanity of a woman who had treated him so badly. The result was satisfactory. For once in my experience, common sense has prevailed. I wish you good morning, Signor Bethune, and hope to have the pleasure of meeting you again."



"I shall not forget that it is Italian common sense that has won the day," said Bethune cordially, as, with another shake of the hand, his *insouciant* visitor bowed himself out of the door.

Half an hour afterwards, Bethune was tearing into tiny fragments his now useless letters, and debating with himself as to the necessity of seeing Mrs. Trevelyan again, in order to confirm her in her resolution of starting for London at once, when a timid knock was heard at the door.

"*Herein*," he said mechanically, but started to his feet in annoyed surprise as Mrs. Trevelyan herself glided quickly into the room, and sank down panting on the nearest chair. Her gay attire of the preceding day was replaced by a simple black dress; a black veil covered her head—she was dressed for a new part.

"Are there no limits to your folly, Mrs. Trevelyan?" asked Bethune sternly. "I was about to call upon you before leaving."

"Were you really?" she cried, clasping her hands affectedly. "Oh, I was so afraid you would go away and leave me all alone; and I am so miserable—so frightened! I have have had a



cruel scene with that dreadful baron. The princess has behaved shamefully to me. I felt there was no safety but with you."

As usual, Mrs. Trevelyan was interweaving truth and falsehood. It was true that she had a scene with the baron, but that was on the previous evening, when the princess had made her unlock her door and let in the baron and his wrath. Now, as she had just had the pleasure of seeing the baron drive away for good and all down the Cadore road, she knew perfectly well that she had nothing more to fear from that quarter. Her personal game was pretty well played out, but before disappearing from the scene, she could not resist making one last effort to wreak her spite upon Edith.

She had deliberately chosen to seek Bethune in person, instead of sending for him, in order that Cortina gossip (which must certainly find its way to Schluderbach) might couple her name with his. Even before raising her heavy veil, her keen glance had noticed the torn letters, and the empty, untorn envelope directed to Mrs. Henderson; she saw the strapped valise, and divined Bethune's haste to leave Cortina. Every

hour that she could keep him away from Edith was so much triumph, so much gain to the cause of hatred. Her spirit rose to the occasion; all her faculties were on the alert; no device should be left untried to keep him with her as long as possible. Throwing back her veil, she displayed a pale face and heavy eyes; she leant back in the chair with a deep sigh, and pressed her hand to her side.

"It was very wrong of you to come here," went on Bethune, still angrily. "You might have been sure that I would come to you, or you might have sent for me if you were not sure."

"I know, I know, but indeed I never thought. I was crazed with terror. Oh, dear, good friend, do not forsake me in this extremity!"

And she rocked herself to and fro, repeatedly pressing her hand to her side. Bethune paced impatiently up and down. What was he to do with this woman?

"You really must compose yourself," he said presently, with all the patience he could command. "I will take you back to your hotel, and make arrangements for your journey."

She seized his hand and pressed it convul-

sively. "Oh! do not make me go back there," she cried; "I never want to see the princess again! Let us get a carriage here, and I can send to the Golden Star for my luggage; it is all ready, for I passed the night packing. I long to get to England as soon as possible; but oh, I feel so ill, I doubt if I shall ever arrive there. Ah! that pain again!" And thereupon closing her eyes, and contracting her features as though enduring acute agony, Mrs. Trevelyan let her hands drop as in an extremity of helpless suffering.

Bethune was thoroughly alarmed; he was no match for this accomplished comedian. "Poor thing, poor thing!" he exclaimed compassionately, "indeed I must send for a doctor." And then he poured out a glass of water, of which Mrs. Trevelyan feebly drank a few drops; and presently the pain had passed, and she said she felt a little better, and would not hear of a doctor being sent for. Again Bethune urged her to go back to the hotel; he would guarantee, he said, that no one should annoy her; but again the lady burst into a passion of sobs, and declared she could never feel better till out of Cortina.

"One last favour, my friend," she cried, with mournfully appealing eyes. "Please order me a carriage, have me put into it, and make the driver understand that he must take me all the way to Conegliano. Then I'll say farewell to you, and if—if I die on the road to England, well, so much the better perhaps for Major Trevelyan, as well as myself."

Now, if at this juncture some good fairy had lifted the veil from the siren's artifices, and shown Bethune the lie she was enacting, he would probably have replied with brutal common sense: "Stay or go as you like, dear madam; it is no concern of mine, for in half an hour I return to Schluderbach, and can only wish you a pleasant journey." Unluckily, no good fairy was at hand; Mrs. Trevelyan was an admirable actress, and without her rouge, was one of those pallid blondes who are credited with extreme delicacy while enjoying perfect health.


So Bethune kindly replied, that she seemed in no condition to travel, offered to arrange everything for her, and begged her to rest at Cortina till the following day at least.

"What! stop here by myself!" she exclaimed in a tone of intense alarm.

"But surely you have your maid, that nice girl who was with you in Florence?" suggested poor Bethune desperately.

The lady shook her head. "Alas! no," she sighed. "I was compelled to part with her in Germany." It was unnecessary to mention that the girl in question had tired of never receiving anything but an occasional old dress in lieu of wages. "I am quite, quite alone. Please put me into a carriage, and leave me to my fate. Indeed, indeed, you must not stay with me; it would be too selfish to ask it. You must go back to Schluderbach, of course. Never mind what becomes of me."

Bethune had never proposed staying with her, but now, of course, the kind-hearted man began to feel that it might be his duty to do so; duties are often unwelcome. Then he pictured to himself Edith waiting for him up there among the fir woods of Schluderbach, and he could have torn his hair in his perplexity. What should he do? How could he let this poor sick woman set out alone on the long seventy mile drive to the Conegliano



station? It would be too cruel ; his conscience forbade it precisely because his heartstrings were pulling so eagerly in another direction. At least, he ought to go with her part of the way. And as he walked up and down, debating with himself, Mrs. Trevelyan was watching him narrowly from beneath her half-closed lids, and could have laughed aloud in malicious glee. She knew how to deal with her old slave still.

Bidding her rest quietly, Bethune presently left the room to see about a carriage, and upon the landing outside encountered his pretty hostess in eager confabulation with the *capo politico*. Had he been less pre-occupied, he would have noticed the twinkle in the latter's eye, and the confused alacrity with which the former turned towards him. He went to the point at once.

"Could a carriage be found without delay, to drive a lady, and perhaps himself, as far as Longarone and Conegliano?"

"Yes ; there was a Longarone coachman downstairs. If the gentleman would like to see him, no doubt it could be arranged."

"But on no account offer him more than a

hundred *lire*," put in the *capo politico*; "these men always ask more than they expect to get, and that is the proper price."

The bargain was soon made; Bethune was in no mood to chaffer about terms. Then he made another inquiry in which he had a stronger personal interest. Could he find any one to take a letter to Schluderbach immediately; some one who might be trusted to deliver it faithfully?

"Our Cortina men are all honest," said the landlady proudly.

"There are no wine shops on the road to make them loiter," added the *capo politico*, laughing.

Meanwhile, no sooner had the door closed behind Bethune, than Mrs. Trevelyan started up lightly from her invalid position. All symptoms of suffering had vanished. Taking a visiting card from her purse, she wrote upon it: "Mrs. Trevelyan presents her compliments to Mrs. Henderson, and begs to say, that Mr. Bethune accompanies her to England, and charges her to express his regrets at not being able to make his adieux to Mrs. Henderson in person."

Then, having read these words over again with

a triumphant smile, she inserted the card in the empty envelope addressed to Edith in Bethune's hand.

"This is my trump card," she exclaimed, and throwing her handkerchief over it, she sank back in the chair to await Bethune's return, and resumed her air of patient suffering. She felt sure that chance would aid her to play her trump to the best advantage.

Soon Bethune came back, asked her how she felt, and, taking a sheet of paper from his bag, carried the inkstand to a table near the window, and wrote an earnest, if hasty, note to Edith, in which he briefly mentioned Mrs. Trevelyan's return to England, and explained that her suffering condition compelled him, in common humanity, to escort her part of the way. "But to-morrow, or, at the latest, the day after, dear Mrs. Henderson," he wrote in conclusion, "I shall return to Schluderbach to pray for an answer to the question I asked you at Peutelstein."

Mrs. Trevelyan experienced a pang of spite when she saw Bethune go to the other side of the room to write. "He is afraid I should contami-



nate the very paper on which he addresses his simpleton! We shall see."

Now the hostess came to the door with the messenger for Schluderbach, a stolid-looking young countryman. Both stared inquisitively at the languid form in the arm-chair. Bethune gave the letter, money, instructions, and quickly dismissed them. Directly they had left the room, Mrs. Trevelyan, who had seemed too much absorbed in her own reflections to notice their presence, languidly asked if that woman were the mistress of the inn. She had something particular to say to her respecting the boxes at the Golden Star.

Bethune offered to give the message, but Mrs. Trevelyan gently shook her head. No; it was necessary for her to speak to the woman herself, and, professing to hear her moving about on the landing, she walked tottering out of the room.

Bethune calmly continued his preparations for the distasteful journey. Once outside, Mrs. Trevelyan tore downstairs like a girl of fifteen. Every vein in her body tingled with agitation.

What if she were too late! She dared to thank Heaven when, at the last turn of the wooden stairs,

she saw the man lighting his pipe at the kitchen fire and gossiping with the maids. She hesitated a moment; for that which she had to do she would have preferred to find him alone. She looked round vaguely. On a chair outside the kitchen door lay a hat—in it a letter. Fortune favoured her: it was Bethune's! In an instant she had seized it, and put the one she held in her handkerchief in its place.

She had barely made the exchange when the landlady appeared at the end of the passage, and looked at her sharply.

"Ah! I was seeking you," exclaimed Mrs. Trevelyan, assuming a bewitching smile, and proceeded to give precise instructions about her luggage. Then slowly, and with halting steps, she laboured up the stairs till she turned the corner, when she ran swiftly up the remainder of the flight. When out of sight, the hostess in her turn took up the letter in the hat, turned it over and over, and examined it attentively. It seemed identical with the first. The woman was puzzled. What had the suspicious Englishwoman been about? However, it was no business of hers,

and she said nothing to the messenger, who now appeared from the kitchen, and, putting on his hat, carefully bestowed the letter in his waistcoat pocket, and started on his uphill tramp, unconscious of the load of misery he bore about him.

Now that the deed was done, Mrs. Trevelyan was astonished to find that her first feelings were of fear rather than triumph. This trick discovered, the last vestige of her power over Bethune would be at an end, and with it all possibility of extracting money from him.

Now she must feign increased illness, yet not illness of a kind to prevent her from attempting her journey. She must work upon his compassion, so as to keep him with her for some days at least.

Her guilty tremor had made her so pale by the time she reached the upper story, that her *rôle* of invalid was comparatively easy. She started nervously as she passed the clock upon the landing. In the upper part of the case was the figure of a Tyrolese huntsman, whose eyes rolled from side to side with each beat of the pendulum. To her excited imagination the wooden face resembled that

of the peasant striding on towards Schluderbach with the fatal letter.

They reached Longarone that night, but there Mrs. Trevelyan was seized with so violent an attack of pain, that she found herself unable to quit her bed the next morning. Poor Bethune passed most of the day wandering aimlessly about the village, cursing the fate that kept him away from Edith. The following day the invalid managed to continue the journey to Conegliano; but another attack, unluckily, came on there, and only passed away after the last train had gone. Bethune began to fear that the poor thing would scarcely reach England alive. Mrs. Trevelyan knew how to work upon his feelings, and his warmest pity was aroused for her. She seemed a changed woman, and the regrets she expressed for her past life, her humble hope of possible reconciliation with her husband, affected him almost to tears. But, in spite of his tender-heartedness, he was no fool; and now again a suspicion flashed upon him that she was acting a part. He reproached himself for the thought, but still it came. And at Padua she thoroughly overdid the farce. There she feigned to be in

so alarming a state, that Bethune, without consulting her, rushed out in search of a doctor.

He speedily found one, and, returning with him to the hotel, surprised the supposed patient in the act of eating a hearty lunch to replace breakfast she had thought it necessary to send away untouched. Her presence of mind did not fail her; she had a long list of alarming symptoms to describe, but the well-picked chicken bones and empty dishes, told their own tale. The doctor, fortunately, as honest as he was sensible, told Bethune, with a significant twinkle, that the lady's illness was simply on the nerves, and that change of climate would be the best possible cure.

A few hours later, Mrs. Trevelyan found herself ensconced in a first-class *coupé*, with a well-filled purse, and her fare paid as far as Turin.

Bethune's contempt for her unworthy conduct had not checked his generosity. She put her head out of window as the train began to move.


"Good-bye, dear Bethune!" she cried effusively. "Pray give my best love to our darling Edith!"

Then, leaning cosily back in the corner, she laughed aloud. It was pleasant to lift her mind

at last, now that she had got all she could out of her dupe. "I much doubt if that proud fool at Schluderbach will give him a chance of an explanation now, after all these days," said she to herself. "My letter has had time to take effect." And with this comforting reflection she closed her eyes, and slept soundly through the night.

As for Bethune, he paced the streets and arcades of Padua for hours, in a state akin to desperation, bitterly cursing his own folly, and inveighing against the time-table. There was no train back to Conegliano that night. Scattering his gold broadcast like an American, he only managed to reach Schluderbach towards the end of the second day after Mrs. Trevelyan had left Padua.

Everything looked unchanged in the beautiful valley. A gentle wind was rustling through the firs, cattle bells were tinkling, the herds were frisking about as usual in the pastures near the inn; a few pale stars were beginning to show in the soft evening sky. He glanced eagerly up at Edith's window; the vases of Alpine flowers had vanished from the sill, and children were looking out.



"The English ladies—are the English ladies at home?" he asked breathlessly, as the chaise stopped and the landlady came bustling out.

The woman shook her head. "The English ladies went away several days ago." "Had they left no letter for him?" "She didn't think so; she would ask her daughter. No, not even a message."

"Where had they gone?"

"How was she to know? It was no business of hers. All she knew was, that they had driven down to the Toblach station, and that the artist Herr had gone with them."

## CHAPTER X.

"Oh, how dark your villa was,  
Windows fast and obdurate!  
How the garden grudged me grass  
Where I stood—the iron gate  
Ground its teeth to let me pass."

ROBERT BROWNING.

BETHUNE was frantic with disappointment. He underwent the torture of a night at Schluderbach—the empty nest from which his love had flown—in order to cross-question everybody in and about the inn. After all, he could learn very little, and, moreover, exposed himself to the uncouth sympathy and uncouth jests of the Kellnerinn Marie and her sisters.

One fact puzzled him greatly. His Cortina letter had arrived, had been delivered to Mrs. Henderson by Marie herself. An hour or so later



the English ladies had given notice that they were going immediately, were ready to start by the same evening, and only put off the journey till the next morning because one of the party was unwell.

“Which one?” was Bethune’s anxious inquiry. The girl did not remember, was uncertain whether it was the short, or the tall, or the stout lady. In vain Bethune asked himself why his letter should have driven them away from Schluderbach; why Edith should have thought it unworthy of any reply?

Had she waited longer, he felt that then indeed she might have had some reason to doubt his word. He could not rest in this suspense, to which another point gave added bitterness. Maynard had gone away at the same time. What could have happened to make the artist give up the work he had planned to do in the Val d’Ampezzo? Could it be possible that there was no truth in the tale of the artist’s love for Miss Roland?


For more than a fortnight poor Bethune wandered up and down the Tyrol, in the vain hope of discovering his vanished love. He stopped at

every place likely to attract travellers, and everywhere inquired for the English ladies.

Just as sheep look all alike to Cockney eyes, Tyrolese vision discerns no difference among Englishwomen; so more than once our distracted hero gained, as he thought, certain information of his missing friends, and, full of hope, would make his way to some distant village only to find that he had come on a fool's errand.

Once, indeed, he came upon their track; but only to lose it as soon as found. This was at Botzen, where he saw Edith's and Miss Whitman's name in the hotel-book. By the date, they must have arrived there the day after they left Schludersbach, but that was more than a fortnight before, and no one of the busy people at the *Kaiser Krone* remembered whither these special English ladies had gone. English travellers are plentiful as blackberries in Tyrol during the summer season.

Then Bethune bethought himself of writing to their Bellosguardo address, and lingered on at Botzen for another ten days, haunting the post daily for an answer that never came. At the end of that period, hope and patience both failed him;



he travelled straight through to Florence, and without delay drove from the station up the hill to the villa.

But the dogs, the Persian cat, and the faithful servant in charge, were the only tenants of the bright little home. He saw his own letters from Botzen amid a heap of others on the table.

"Don't you send on your ladies' letters?" he asked impatiently.

Old Ansano shrugged his shoulders. He had no instructions to that effect. His mistress had written about a month ago, he said, bidding him forward nothing more to Schluderbach, but she had given no fresh address.

"Were they soon coming back?"

Another shrug. The old man didn't know, but supposed they would return at the end of September.

On the table lay a volume of Shelley that Bethune had often seen in Edith's hands. He took it up and kissed it fervently while the old servant was reclosing the shutters opened in honour of his visit.

Then he moodily drove back to the city. There

was no one in Florence to give him the news he craved. Porta was still absent, Maynard's rooms locked up, Miss Whitman's many friends all away. So he wandered about the streets for a few days, like a ghost haunting scenes of past happiness; went up to Bellosguardo again, and found still the same dreary blank.

By this time he had fretted himself almost to a shadow. Sleep and appetite failed him more and more. He tried to work, but invariably tore up as much as he wrote. All kinds of fears and presentiments assailed him. He was as nervous as a sickly woman. His restless nights were disturbed by hideous dreams, in which sometimes a huge snake, with the features of Mrs. Trevelyan, was enlacing Edith in its deadly folds. Sometimes—and this was a vision that often haunted his pillow—he dreamt that Edith was drowning amidst stormy waves, while he vainly tried to reach her ere she sank. Sometimes Edith disappeared beneath the muddy waters just as he was about to clasp her in his arms. At other times she was crying out to him for help, and he was held struggling on the shore by some invisible force. He would start from

these dreams bathed in cold perspiration, and trembling as with an ague fit.

He began to think that he was going mad, and the intense horror of that thought, strange to say, steadied his nerves for a few hours. He made his will, dividing all he possessed between his brother and Edith—"the lady I had hoped to make my wife;" had the document duly witnessed at the British Consulate, and deposited it in the Consul's hands. Then, leaving instructions with his servant to keep in daily communication with Ansano, and let him (Bethune) know when the ladies were expected, he left Florence and went off to Orvieto.

It was the most sensible step he could have taken. The brisk mountain air of the "inland Capri" acted like a tonic on his wearied system. He ate, he slept; his nightmare dreams faded away. The wondrous cathedral aroused the artist-feeling in him once more. He had seen it before, but hurriedly, during a flying visit. Now he lovingly studied its every detail. He passed whole days on the forlorn grass-grown piazza that so unworthily surrounds this architectural marvel, examining the spirited bas-reliefs on the column, the

noble tracery of the arches, the intricate loveliness and exquisite harmony and lightness of the whole façade.

Each morning as he advanced up the narrow street leading from his hotel to the piazza, he felt his burden lightened as he caught sight of the grand cathedral front, in which mosaics, blending softly with time-mellowed marble, made the whole glow like some huge opal against the background of Italian sky. He passed long hours in the Luca Signorelli chapel, studying the noble frescoes that helped to inspire Michael Angelo; and now and again turned to enjoy the timid tenderness of Fra Angelico's angel groups.

He explored all the Orvietan chronicles he could lay his hands upon, in search of materials for a study of the times when an army of artificers and stonemasons, of sculptors, painters, and mosaic workers were labouring for the glory of God on this wind-swept hill of Orvieto. The church, erected in honour of a mythical miracle, is itself a true one.

No one, perhaps, ever explored Orvieto so thoroughly as did this troubled lover. Always

trying to cheat that hunger of the soul which nothing could really appease save sight and speech of the woman he loved, he tramped over every inch of the straggling village-city, up and down its tortuous streets of mean, dingy houses. The gloomy black tufa walls and archways of this least architectural of Italian towns, formed at least a good background for the handsome faces and bright red scarfs of its female population.

Often in turning down some queer nook that seemed to lead to nowhere, he would find that he had reached the edge of his Orvieto world, and gazed out upon a coronal of mountains, some bare, some wooded, all exquisite in colouring. Or else he looked over a precipice wall, draped with hanging plants, down to slopes of sheeny green olives, dark green vineyards, bright green fields, below which the river Paglia threaded its way through its broad white bed; after issuing from the pleasant wooded gorge in which it seems to spring.

And as one quiet, busy day followed another, Bethune's misgivings gradually lost shape, and gave way to comparative cheerfulness. Surely Edith would soon be in Florence now, and once

there, the mysterious silence would be dissipated—all would be well. Meanwhile, it was certainly better to pass the dreary waiting time here in Orvieto rather than in Florence, where every stone, every building—nay, even every varying aspect of hill and valley, of river and of sky—spoke to him of Edith and of past hours spent in her presence. Yet, if Bethune had been perpetually condemned to his own companionship, it is doubtful if change of scene would have sufficed to restore his hopes; but there chanced to be a knot of artists staying in the hotel, who speedily discovered that Bethune was one of themselves, and in their society, unwelcome though it was to him at first, the evening hours passed pleasantly enough.

At last, one morning, a scrawl from his servant came to tell him that Ansano's mistresses were expected to return the following day, so Bethune started for Florence at once by way of Sienna, at that time the nearest route.

He refrained from going up to Bellosguardo the same evening. The ladies might be too tired to see him, he thought, so he walked up and down the Lung' Arno, feasting his eyes on the tower-



crowned hill that was once more the shrine of his divinity. In spite of having almost persuaded himself that his misgivings had no basis but in his own despondent imagination, it was significant that he did not venture to go to meet his friends at the station. In old times, that would have been his first thought. Now, there was, he felt, an intangible something to be explained away before all could be as before.

Again and again he told himself that Edith's silence must have been accidental, not intentional—caused perhaps by sudden bad news to one or other of the party. Had she remained long enough at Schluderbach to know that he had not returned on the day he named, then, indeed, he could have comprehended that she should have felt bitterly indignant; but surely that hasty departure of hers pointed to some event altogether extraneous to any doings of his own. And yet, and yet, the darkness was very black, and no satisfactory conclusion could be reached until he stood once more in Edith's presence. Perhaps at that very moment, while he was pacing the deserted Lung' Arno, she might be employed reading his

letters, or writing to bid him come to her. At that thought he hurried homewards; for what if a note came from her while he was out!


But no welcome scrap of paper awaited him; none came the next morning. Then his impatience could no longer be restrained, and before eleven o'clock he was ringing at the little door among the flowers in the courtyard of the villa.

Old Ansano quickly answered the summons.

"The ladies have returned, I know," said Bethune cheerfully, with his foot on the threshold of the big vaulted drawing-room. But Ansano's stout form barred the way to paradise.

"I have strict orders to admit no one, sir," he said, with some confusion. "The ladies only returned last night, and are not very well." Then, plainly pitying Bethune's disappointment, he continued: "I will go and ask if they can receive you. Please wait a minute."

So saying he closed the door, and Bethune, shut outside, tried to calm his impatience as best he could, striding quickly up and down the *loggia*. Soon Ansano's deliberate footsteps approached the door once more. Bethune came forward eagerly.



"Very sorry, sir," said the man, shaking his head, and with the manifest confusion always displayed by Italian servants when telling fibs on their employers', not their own, account; "very sorry, but Signora Edith is out, and the Signorina too busy to see you."

Bethune began to feel angry. This old man was always so stupid. "Are you sure there is no mistake?" he asked sharply. Ansano shook his head.

Pulling out a card, Bethune wrote a line upon it, begging to know if the ladies could receive him later in the day. "Take this to your mistress," he said impatiently; "I regret disturbing her, but it is important."

Again the man disappeared; again Philip Bethune paced up and down among the flower-stands. He felt chilled to the heart. What mystery was lurking about the villa? Even the noisy dogs were silent; not one of them had rushed out to give him the usual barking welcome. This time Ansano returned immediately. "There is no answer, sir," he said with evident reluctance.

Bethune bit his lips savagely, and, with a hasty

nod, turned on his heel a banished man. His anger carried him at a furious pace down part of the descent. At a sharp turn of the road, the creaking of ascending wheels, the crack of a whip, renewed his hopes. Might it not be Edith returning from some business errand to the city!

He clutched at the idea. Yes, it must be Edith: she would never have turned him from her door like an importunate beggar. The vehicle came in sight: alas! its only occupant was a well-known Scotch doctor, who in passing bestowed a friendly nod on our raging hero.

Bethune was almost beside himself by the time he reached his rooms in the Piazza St. Spirito; and throwing himself wearily on the sofa, he buried his face in his hands, and strove to collect his ideas.

What was the barrier that parted him from the woman he loved? What had he done, that Miss Whitman, his old and trusted friend, should so cruelly close her doors against him? If she would only write; only tell him the cause of his banishment! This cold, impenetrable silence, how could he fight against it—what arms could he use? Then

his thoughts flew to Maynard. If returned, Frank could certainly give him the clue to the mystery.

He started up, and hurried to his friend's house.

The door was open, the ante-chamber encumbered with packing-cases. Maynard's servant and a strange man were busily arranging furniture and rolling carpets into neat piles. They broke off their work when they noticed Bethune's presence.

"No ; the *padrone* had not come back yet ; but didn't the signor know the great news ?"

"What news ?" demanded Bethune huskily, grasping the back of a chair, and turning paler than he was before.

"To think that the signor should not have heard ! Why, Signor Maynard was going to America to marry a rich young lady, and everything here was to be sold, excepting the pictures, which he was to take with him."

Bethune let go the chair, and, breathing more freely, inquired if Maynard was coming to Florence before starting.

"Yes, he would come the following week to see about the sale."

"Not before ! Then could the man give his

present address?" "No! Signor Maynard had written last from Milan, but all letters were to be kept till his return. In a week he would be here," the man repeated cheerfully, as he wiped a layer of dust from the antique flower-stand.

Bethune turned disconsolately into the deserted studio, and stared at its bare walls, thinking of the day when Edith had hallowed it by her presence—the day when, for the first time, he had begun to realize how dear she was to him.

"Our friends always fail us in our greatest need," thought he bitterly, ungratefully forgetting what terrible doubts the servant's words had removed. How was it possible to wait a whole week? The suspense would drive him mad. No; he must write again to Edith, to Miss Whitman, and if both still refused to see him, he would way-lay them near their own door, would dog their footsteps, and compel them to clear up the cruel mystery.

Out in the streets once more, he wandered aimlessly about for hours, too miserable to feel his weariness.

Near the door of the admirable library, which

has made the name of Vieusseux a household word to travellers of all nations, he came upon some old friends, an English family just arrived from London, who greeted him eagerly, pressed him to come and dine with them; and in three minutes had asked him fifty questions respecting the sights of Florence, lodgings for the winter, masters for the girls, and numerous other requirements.

He curtly refused their hospitality—so curtly that the next instant he felt bound to excuse himself on the score of ill-health, and promised to call upon them as soon as he should be better.

He looked so worn and haggard, that his apologies were graciously accepted; the genial paterfamilias offered to come and look him up, while the mamma shook her head over the disastrous effects of foreign food on English constitutions, and prayed him to be careful of his diet, and to drink plenty of good port wine.

Bethune thankfully broke away from them, and yet the encounter had done him good—had lightened the pariah-like feeling that had oppressed him ever since his repulse at Bellosguardo.

Now, remembering that he had swallowed

nothing but some black coffee that day, he turned into a *restaurant*. Even lovers must eat, and even unhappy ones, like our hero, feel better after eating. Food, moreover, brought inspiration. Porta must be in Florence by this time, Porta might be available as an ambassador to the villa. What a fool he was not to have thought of him before! And he was collected enough now even to remember the prescribed mode of obtaining admittance during Porta's working hours. Two loud raps, followed by a whistle, as usual brought the artist himself to the door, and in his usual costume.

He welcomed Bethune with open arms, and somewhat to that gentleman's surprise, kissed him on either cheek, in that primitive fashion which is, however, less universal among Italians than Frenchmen.

On an ordinary occasion, Bethune would probably have yielded to British prejudice, and hastily withdrawn from the proffered salute; but now, having sought the artist for the purpose of enlisting his services, he felt tolerant of foreign ways, and received the greeting in the spirit in which it was offered.



"Well returned! (*ben tornato*), signor critic; you are the first swallow of our winter flight. Come and look at my summer's work: your opinion of it is worth having."

Four or five landscapes stood on easels in the untidy, dusty studio, which was emphatically a place of work, not show. People came here for the pictures alone; there were no adventitious attractions in the shape of rare brocades, sculptured cabinets, Venetian glass, old china, and mediæval armour. It was the studio of a man living *for* his art, without caring overmuch how to live *by* it.

Bethune glanced round approvingly, and said, "You have certainly lost no time this summer, Porta; all these are new, I see."

"And plenty of new sketches also," answered Porta, nodding towards a corpulent portfolio. "I'll show them to you after you have looked at the finished pictures. I want your judgment first on these."

Poor Bethune had seldom felt less capable of exercising his critical faculties. The anxieties he was enduring had swept away almost all thinking power. Nevertheless, he did his best to use his

eyes intelligently, and it needed no effort to give sincerest praise to Porta's magnificent paintings. His verdict was speedily given; in his opinion they were superior to anything his friend had before produced. Sundry mannerisms and defects observable in former pictures had disappeared, while former excellencies were refined and perfected.

The subject of the largest work was the majestic pile of Monte Pania, as seen from the Valley of the Magra. The others were all lovely bits of coast scenery in the neighbourhood of Spezzia and Lerici, excepting one. This was a simple study of a dawn effect on a bare, scarred peak, standing in majestic loneliness. In one corner of the background a far-away glimpse of snow fields, lower hills, and distant forests, intensified the isolation of this mountain monarch.

To this last picture, full of force and poetical feeling, Bethune returned again and again. It suited his own desolate, despairing mood.

"This is the best of all," he said decisively. "You must let me have this picture at your own price, Porta."

Porta shook his curly mane, and stretched out

his hands deprecatingly. "For once I disagree with your judgment, my friend. This is *not* my best picture. Do not make up your mind about it to-day. You are not in an impartial mood. You look ill and harassed. Wait till you pay me a second visit, and then I think you will prefer the Monte Pania. You shall have it at the same price as the other; although, indeed, I would rather not sell any of them just yet."

"If that is all, you shall keep the one I choose all the season," answered Bethune, who was too much of an artist himself not to comprehend Porta's reluctance to part at once with his new works; "but I shall not change my mind. It is your lonely peak that I want."

And as he lingered over the pictures, he was chiefly meditating how to turn the conversation to his private affairs; how to confide his love and sorrow to this Italian with whom he had so slight an intimacy. At the same time Porta was beginning to be excited.

"*Caro mio*, you are unjust, I tell you," he cried, "examine again my Pania. Deny, if you can, that it is my best work."

"It is grand," replied Bethune heartily; "as regards mastery of technicalities, it is perhaps your best work, and certainly no other man in Italy could rival it, but, what will you?—even critics may have their sympathies. Your lonely peak goes to my heart—it is so intensely sad."

Porta gave a shrug of acquiescence. Never had a man such expressive shoulders. "Truly, I was sad enough when I was painting it—anxious about my poor sister, troubled by many things; but the day I gave it the last touches, there came joyful tidings. That good angel of Bellosguardo, Signora Veetman, who never forgets her friends, had charged a great and good German doctor she knew to go and see my sister, if he passed through Florence. Now came a letter from this doctor, telling me that he thought he could cure her, if he might take her to his *Stabilimento* (establishment) in Germany for a time. As to payment, I was to let him have one of my pictures if he succeeded—nothing if he failed. Judge what I felt, my friend! I flew back to Florence, saw the doctor, made all arrangements, placed my sister in his hands, and then went back to the mountains with a lighter heart than I had had for many years."

"And the experiment succeeded?" interrupted Bethune. "That accounts for the change in you."

"It did, most completely. The doctor was better than his word. He has given my sister back to me as sane as I am, and, excepting for her deafness, which is incurable, in perfect health. Therefore, I know that these later pictures are better than the one you prefer. How could they not be, when every stroke in them was a thanksgiving for the lightening of my heavy load! As for the doctor, he has had his picture, and when next he comes to Florence, I shall paint his grand good head. Has he not restored my faith in humanity?"

Bethune looked admiringly at the single-hearted artist, whose joys and sorrows were alike unselfish, and, after earnestly congratulating him on his sister's recovery, felt at liberty to attack the subject he had most at heart. He began by asking if Porta had seen Miss Whitman since she came back.

"What!" shouted the artist, "she is here, and I knew it not! I shall fly to her at once. Is she well, the good angel? and my clever pupil,

is she at Bellosguardo? You have seen them, of course?"

Then Bethune, after a short hesitation—a last internal struggle with his natural reticence, already half dissolved by Porta's expansiveness—briefly told his hopes and fears, related how he had been refused admittance to the villa, and the unexplained silence that was breaking his heart.

Porta, habitually the worst of listeners, heard his tale with real attention, mingled with a little regret. "My promising pupil won't do much in art, after all," thought he. But he only interrupted Bethune now and then by ejaculations of astonishment and interest.

The Italian's entire nature seemed changed by the magic of happiness. While miserable he had concentrated all his thoughts on the world of art; resolutely shut himself out from all participation in the concerns of life. Now, the well of his sympathies was unfrozen, and they flowed freely and warmly.

He pooh-poohed poor Bethune's dismal forebodings, and bade him take heart. "You lovers never see clearly!" he exclaimed, with a genial

laugh. "You are always blinded by inordinate hopes or exaggerated fears. Do not be afraid—all will end well! These friends at Bellosguardo are no ordinary mortals—they are angels of goodness. How, then, can they be unjust? Depend upon it, there is some very simple solution of the mystery that perplexes you. My own opinion is, that some fraud has been committed, some letter stolen. Doubtless that woman at Cortina is at the bottom of it all. You know how she hated Signora Edith."

"Hated is too strong a word," said Bethune deprecatingly. "What had she to do with Mrs. Henderson? She had wronged her enough in old times, of which you know nothing."

"Ah, ah! You have said it," exclaimed Porta, with a rapid gesture expressive of conviction. "What stronger motive for hatred could a bad woman have? Look here!" and striding to the farthest corner of the studio, he tore down a sketch pinned with its face to the wall.

It was his hasty portrait of Mrs. Trevelyan. "Look at this countenance, my unsuspecting friend," he continued, vehemently waving his arm.

"Does it not express a spiteful hatred, capable of any crime? Well, this was the look she wore when watching your *bella signora* at our friend's, the American. I showed this once to Mrs. Henderson, and warned her to beware of the woman."

Bethune, too much agitated to sit still, paced the studio, pondering the artist's words. In spite of certain improbabilities, the conviction would force itself upon him that Porta's suspicions were correctly aimed.

"Cheer up, my friend, cheer up!" repeated Porta encouragingly, as he rested his long, lithe fingers on the Englishman's arm. "I fly to Bellosguardo; I go to the root of the matter; and as I return I will bring you news that the mystery is cleared up." Then Bethune left him, and walked homewards with a lightened heart.

On his writing-table lay two letters. With a mighty throb of joy he saw that one, the bulkier of the two, was directed in Edith's hand.

"My darling!" he cried, and tore it open. Two enclosures fell out. They were his own letters from Botzen, returned unopened: nothing more. Stunned by this fresh blow, some minutes passed



before he looked at the other letter. It was from Miss Whitman, and contained these words :

“Miss Whitman presents her compliments, and hopes that Mr. Bethune will see the propriety of discontinuing his visits to Bellosguardo.”

He let the note drop, and groaned aloud. “But what have I done ?” he cried, “that I should be insulted in this way. At least, she must tell me my crime.”

Then he hurried back to the artist's house, to show him Miss Whitman's cold dismissal, but Porta had already started for Bellosguardo.

## CHAPTER XI.

" All thoughts, all passions, all delights,  
    Whatever stirs this mortal frame,  
All are but ministers of Love,  
    And feed his sacred flame."

COLERIDGE.

    " If Hope prostrate lie,  
    Love too will sink and die.  
But Love is subtle, and doth proof derive  
From her own life that Hope is still alive ;  
And bending o'er, with soul transfusing eyes,  
And the soft murmurs of the mother-dove,  
Woos back the fleeting spirit, and half supplies ;  
Thus Love repays to Hope what Hope first gave to Love.  
Yet haply there will come a weary day,  
    When overtasked at length  
Both Love and Hope beneath the load give way.  
Then with a statue's smile, a statue's strength,  
Stands the mute sister, Patience, nothing loth,  
And both supporting, does the work of both."

COLERIDGE.

MISS WHITMAN was hard at work in her scantily furnished wooden chamber. Lacking a sofa, she sat coiled up on her hard bed, her blotting-pad in her lap, her inkstand—a very capacious one—

perilously perched on the window-sill at her right hand, several closely written sheets strewn about the bed, many more scattered on the floor, and one candle flaring in the draught not far from the ink-stand. The busy authoress had lost much time that afternoon, after seeing Edith drive away to Peutelstein, in speculating on her friend's affairs and every possible and impossible meaning of the strange alteration in Bethune; but at last she drove the matter from her head, and, settling to her work, wrote away with the velocity of a steam-engine. The pressure of other folks' love affairs was hardly an excuse to be offered to a publisher in lieu of a promised article. Her task was nearly ended when Edith came lightly into the room. Without raising her eyes from her work, Miss Whitman put up her hand beseechingly, and said—

“One instant, darling: don't spoil the turn of my last phrase.”

And her pen scratched on vigorously for a few seconds, while Edith, with a happy smile playing shyly in the curves of her expressive mouth, busied herself with gathering up and sorting the pages on the floor.

And now Miss Whitman threw aside her pen and raised her eyes to Edith's face. It was a tell-tale one, at least to those who knew how to read it. The authoress interpreted rightly its dewy radiance, guessed almost everything at one glance. Pushing aside all her papers, she held out those motherly little arms of hers, in which only others' children had ever nestled, and exclaimed—

“Then it has all come right, my darling? Come and tell me about it.”

And Edith, as expansive in happiness as she had been reticent in pain, needed no second summons to pour out her tale in those sympathetic ears.

It was not a long story, yet it took long in the telling, being interrupted by many of those tender little demonstrations natural to women who love each other when talking of other and deeper love.

But at last Miss Whitman started up and asked if Mrs. Mortimer and Maynard knew why they were being kept waiting so unconscionable a time for their supper?

“No, no,” answered Edith, blushing vividly,  
“I want no one besides yourself to know this to-

night; time enough for them to hear it to-morrow, when Mr. Bethune is with me to give me courage to confess."

They lingered a few minutes outside the porch on the hill-side, before crossing the road to the Gast-stube of the noisy inn. It was night now; but the moon shone brightly, stars were throbbing overhead, the Cristallino peaks were soaring heavenwards like fixed white flames, while the lower forest-clad mountains, still partially in shadow, reared their dark forms in the still solemnity. Edith's heart beat high with happy hopes, and as she stood there by her friend's side it seemed to her as if all nature were chanting a hymn of thanksgiving to the music of the murmuring Schluderbach. Suddenly she shivered. "I feel afraid of my own happiness," she whispered, clinging closer to Miss Whitman, "it seems unnatural."

"That is only because you have suffered much, dear child. Soon, I trust, it will seem as natural as your daily bread. You don't know, Edith, how thankful I am that you have found your rest. I have often thought it so hard that you, so young,


so gifted, should have to bear the curse of loneliness. For it is a curse, dear, bear it how we may; try how we may to turn it into a blessing. Even now at my age, after breasting so many storms, I cannot always reconcile myself to it. You have been the dearest comfort to me, and I don't like to think what I shall do without you."

"Without me, dear friend! Do you think I shall love you less because of—of this other love? Don't be so unjust," protested Edith, earnestly.

"Hush, darling. You don't know what you are saying, and I am wicked to talk of selfish fears at this moment."

Then they joined Mrs. Mortimer and the artist, who, fortunately, were so pleasantly engaged in chatting with some new arrivals, that they never thought about grumbling at the delay of their evening meal.

The next morning the kind little authoress, in order to hide her friend's restlessness from Mrs. Mortimer's inquisitive eyes, announced that Edith was going to do some copying for her and that she meant to sequester her for the whole morning.



So the two ladies shut themselves up in Miss Whitman's corner room, though Edith's mood had infected her friend and there was no pretence at work. Neither did they talk much; their hearts were too full, and though Edith heroically refrained from looking out of the window commanding the Cortina road, Miss Whitman kept a vigilant watch.

As hour after hour passed without bringing Bethune, the elder lady began to grow savage.

"Men were different when I was young," thought she. "A pretty lover, to let himself be kept away from this sweet creature by any concerns of that wicked woman at Cortina! He does not deserve Edith, or he would have walked here in the middle of the night rather than keep her waiting." But to Edith she only said that probably no carriage could be had, and that he would have to come by the two-o'clock diligence. But now, towards one o'clock, Fate knocked at the door in the shape of pert Marie, the landlord's daughter, bringing a letter for Mrs. Henderson.

Edith turned first red and then pale as she recognised Bethune's handwriting.

"All right, you can go," said Miss Whitman sharply to the lingering Marie.

"The man wants to know if you will give him a *trinkgeld*. He has come straight from Cortina and it is a very hot day," said the girl.

Miss Whitman poured a quantity of copper coins into Marie's hand and dismissed her hastily.

"What has happened, dear? what is it?" she asked in a frightened voice.

"I don't know yet. Oh, why has he not come himself?" exclaimed Edith in quivering tones. Then she tore open the envelope and found—her enemy's message!

For an instant she stood like one stunned by a heavy blow. Passing her hand over her eyes, she drew herself up to her full height, and said slowly, "Good God! to think that I believed in this man!" Then giving the card to her friend, she threw herself face downwards on the bed, in an agony of voiceless misery.

At first Miss Whitman would not credit the evidence of her own eyes. The thing was too monstrous! She turned the card over and over in her hand, examined the envelope on which the



direction was certainly written by Bethune, and knew not what to think. That Bethune was weak and hesitating in certain things she had always known; but she also knew his character; knew him to be a gentleman in the truest sense of the word; and it was hard to believe him capable of insulting the woman whom, only a few hours before, he had professed to love. Her first thought flew like a well-aimed arrow to the mark. Some treachery had been at work here; the letter must have been tampered with. Those gummed envelopes were easily opened. But still the fact of Bethune's absence remained to be accounted for.

She instantly ran across to the inn. "Was the man from Cortina still there? He was, and refreshing himself after his hot walk with several tankards of foaming beer. Calling him aside, she cross-questioned him about the letter; but all that she could learn was that the Englander had given it to him with his own hands, and that no one else had touched it.

"What was the Englander doing at the time?" she asked anxiously.

The man told her that the Herr was talking to

a lady, and had just ordered a carriage to take them both to Conegliano.

Miss Whitman had heard enough. It was all true, then; Edith was abandoned for Mrs. Trevelyan! Very slowly and reluctantly she returned to her room. What comfort had she to offer to her friend?

But Edith was no longer prostrate on the bed. She was moving about the tiny room with a set face and dry gleaming eyes.

"Don't pity me, dear!" she cried, as she saw Miss Whitman come back with tearful eyes and every feature quivering with emotion. "Don't pity me! help me to be strong. I need no comfort but your love." And tightly squeezing her friend's hand, she continued, "Promise me one thing! Promise never to speak to me of —, never to mention his name. I shall soon be able to forget this folly."

"Let us leave this place at once, dear," returned Miss Whitman; "that is the first thing to be done. We will go wherever you like."

"Yes! let us go away. I could not bear to stay here." And poor Edith looked piteously round the

little room, as though seeking her vanished hopes. "But no one must guess—we must find some reasonable pretext for going away."

The pretext was quickly found. Fate is often kind in small matters when most cruel in great.

The day's post brought Mrs. Mortimer a letter from her son-in-law, praying her to return to England at once. Rosy was very poorly and low spirited, and was beginning to be nervously afraid lest her mother should not be with her during her time of trial.

So the next day saw them on their way to Innsbruck. Maynard, dismayed at the sudden break-up of the party, declared that Schluderbach would be unbearable when they were gone; and, changing all his plans, he escorted them as far as Innsbruck, and then went off on a pedestrian trip up the Zillerthall. The young artist, unobservant as he was, divined that some mystery lay under Edith's altered demeanour and sudden change of projects. Possibly some Cortina gossip had reached his ears, for he made no allusion to Bethune's expected return, and never even mentioned that gentleman's name.

After seeing Mrs. Mortimer safely started on her homeward journey, Miss Whitman and our poor heroine went back to Botzen. The elder lady felt very anxious about Edith, and longed to get her safely back to Florence. Her tearless, resigned suffering meant far more than noisy grief, and Miss Whitman's experience told her that the strain would probably end in a thorough break-down.

But Edith herself would not hear of returning home yet — why should she interfere with her friend's hard-won holiday?—and so she persuaded her to go up to Meran, from whence they could cross the mountains to the Lake of Constance. And at Meran her fictitious strength gave way; and while Bethune was fretting his heart out at Botzen, vainly waiting for an answer to his letter, she was stretched upon a sick bed within less than three hours' distance from him.

With loving care and infinite patience the lady of Bellosguardo attended her night and day, and at last the fever was vanquished. Bodily anguish, bravely borne, gave place to a period of terrible weakness and languor, much lengthened by the patient's utter depression. Edith did not

care to get well. She would have preferred to fade away gradually, motionless, in her little bed. One day she wept and accused Miss Whitman of unkindness when told that the doctor wished her to rise for half an hour. It was cruel, she said, to wish her to move when she only wanted to be let alone. Then she was overwhelmed with remorse at her own ingratitude, embraced her friend amid torrents of convulsive tears, and, thanking her for all her care, promised to try and get well for her sake. After that day she mended rapidly; and soon, by slow stages, Miss Whitman was able to bring her home to Florence. By that time the valiant little authoress's own strength was worn out. The continued anxiety and fatigue had overstrained her feeble constitution, though she would not allow that she was ill, and pooh-poohed her patient's solicitous inquiries and warnings. It was only the effect of the relaxing heat of Meran, she declared, and Edith would see her quite well and hard at work in a few days. But on the night of her arrival at home she suddenly, and for the first time in her life, went off in a dead faint.

The next morning she insisted on rising at her usual early hour, but she looked so very ill and suffering that Edith sent off a pressing message to their friend, the Scotch doctor, without consulting her upon the matter.

They were sitting in the sunny dining-room looking over their accumulated letters, when the announcement that Bethune was at the door came upon them both like a thunderbolt.

Edith turned pale, Miss Whitman red; each looked at the other; Ansano looked at both, and stood waiting for orders in the doorway.

"It might, perhaps, be as well for me to see him," said Miss Whitman, pushing aside her little table and feebly trying to rise from the sofa.

"Not on my account, dear!" exclaimed Edith earnestly, with suddenly blazing cheeks. "Mr. Bethune's conduct admits of no explanation. Of course, you must see whom you please in your own house; but indeed, indeed you are too poorly to see any one to-day. I have already taken the liberty of telling the servants to say that you cannot receive."

"Do as you like, dear," answered Miss Whit-

man, sinking back on her pillow with a weary sigh. She felt so miserably ill that she had no strength to urge that the mere fact of Bethune's presence in Florence was an argument in his favour. So Ansano was told to say that Edith was out, Miss Whitman engaged. When he reappeared with Bethune's prayer for admittance in the evening, it was again Edith who sternly sent word that there was no answer.

In the midst of the pain which Miss Whitman was patiently enduring, she was more occupied about her friend than about herself.

"Come here a moment, dear," she said, in a weak voice. "Are you sure you will not repent this decided dismissal? Believe me, it is not always well to listen to our pride."

Edith shook her head haughtily, and met her friend's searching gaze without flinching.

"In some things there can be no possibility of compromise," she answered firmly. "I am determined to have nothing more to do with this man. I must either trust entirely or not at all. See! I have not even opened these letters of his we found here. I have sealed them up in this envelope, and

now that I know where to send them, Ansano shall take them the next time he goes down to Florence."

"But if Mr. Bethune should come again, should you be equally resolute?" asked Miss Whitman tentatively. This stern side of Edith's character was an unexpected revelation to her.

"What! you would let him come?" counter-questioned Edith, with dilated, fearful eyes. "Then if he comes, I must go. I cannot meet him as a common acquaintance yet—not yet. Oh! pray do not let him come." And Edith, so proud and stern a minute before, was suddenly transformed into a supplicating, grief-stricken woman, as with clasped hands she bent down over the sofa, and pressed her hot cheeks against her friend's.

At that moment the Scotch doctor walked in unannounced. He was a big, burly man, with pleasant grey eyes, bushy grey whiskers, and a benevolent, energetic countenance, that seemed to defy disease to establish a footing where he was present to prevent it.

"Well, and what is wrong with my old friend?" he asked, in those kindly Scotch tones



that had brought hope and health to so many a bedside.

"This is your doing, wicked Edith," exclaimed Miss Whitman, raising herself with an effort, and trying to speak with her usual playfulness. "It is all a mistake, Doctor. Mrs. Henderson has only just recovered from a bad illness, and so she fancies that every one else is going to be ill. I am just a little knocked up with fatigue, and a slight touch of my old complaint; that is all."

But the good doctor took by no means so airy a view of the matter. He did not like the symptoms, especially when he heard Mrs. Henderson's version of them. Having known and attended Miss Whitman for many years, he was acquainted with the weak points of her constitution.

His first act was to order her to bed at once; and on leaving the room, with a less cheerful countenance than he had brought into it, he made a sign to Edith that he wished to speak with her alone.

She slipped out after him, pale and trembling; for she had already guessed his meaning.

"It is serious, isn't it?" she inquired anxiously, as they stood together, well out of Miss Whitman's hearing, on the door-step leading into the cheerful, flowery court. He nodded his head emphatically.

"Are you used to nursing?" he asked abruptly, scanning her from top to toe. "You don't look strong enough. I know that that flighty little maid of our dear friend's is worse than useless in sickness. Hadn't I better send up an experienced woman to help you?"

"No! no!" exclaimed Edith, "she shall not have a stranger about her. I am used to sickness, and am far stronger than I look. Of course I shall nurse her," she went on passionately. "Don't you know that she has knocked herself up entirely with nursing me through a fever? Indeed, you must let me do everything for her myself. But surely, surely you don't think that there is any real danger?"

Poor Edith asked this question in a faint voice, and with dry lips that almost refused to move.

The doctor was much touched, and pressed her hand encouragingly.

"I hope not; I trust not," he replied earnestly; "but our dear friend's mind is too active for her wee little body. She habitually lives strained up to too high a pitch. She gives herself no rest, and if, as I fear, she is threatened with a bad attack of her constitutional malady, it may go hard with her in her present weak state. But you must not be anxious; or at least, if you can't help that, you must hide your anxiety from her. After all, it is a great thing for her to be tended by so loving a friend instead of being left to her servants, as in the last illness which I pulled her through some years ago."

Then the good man gently explained to Edith the nature of her friend's complaint, gave her minute directions what to do if symptoms that he dreaded should come on, and took his leave promising to come again in the evening.

Poor Edith had not the courage to return at once to her suffering friend. She sat down in the empty drawing-room, and pressed her hands to her head in a bewilderment of grief. This new blow nearly overwhelmed her. "Good God!" she exclaimed, "if anything happens I shall feel that

I have killed her! She, so good, so useful, to be struck down, while I, who am needed by no one, have recovered in spite of myself!"

But Edith's prostration did not last long; her spirit soon rose to the occasion, and affection gave her strength to subdue her feelings and bend all her energies to the task before her.

To the servants she gave careful directions, without betraying her fears, and then sought her friend's bedside with a serene countenance and cheerful voice. Towards evening the doctor's gloomy prognostications seemed about to be realized. One sharp attack of pain followed another, and it was no longer possible to hope that the old complaint could be warded off. Between the paroxysms the brave lady did her best to make light of her sufferings—only begged constantly for air, more air.

Her bed stood in a corner of the big vaulted room, and was surrounded by chintz curtains—an English predilection which her long stay in Italy had failed to destroy. Now, as worn out with pain she lay panting for breath, Edith gently drew the little bed away from the wall and

twisted up all the curtains out of the way. In doing this, she caught sight of a water-colour drawing hitherto concealed by the hangings. She could not repress a cry of astonishment, for it was an accurate view of the garden front of Parkston Manor, with the stiff flower beds and thick shrubbery, all just as it was in her childish days before her grandfather had altered the garden to please her taste.

"How strange that you should have a sketch of dear old Parkston!" she exclaimed. "You never told me that you had been there."

Miss Whitman started up in bed, her eyes flaming with excitement. "Parkston!" she cried, "Is *that* Parkston? Your place? Good God!"

Edith was equally excited. "Tell me, tell me dear," she cried, "who painted this? How came you by it?"

Miss Whitman was strangely moved. "I have had it all my life," she said. "It was done by my father—my unknown father. Those are his initials in the corner; although"—this she added, sighing bitterly—"I have never known my father's name."

With trembling fingers Edith unhooked the picture from the wall. There in the corner were her grandfather's initials, J. D., and at the back of the mount were the words, "My English Home," also in Mr. Daunt's handwriting. Edith looked silently at the little picture, while striving to repress the great wave of emotion that shook her frame. It all came to her like a flash of light. The great discovery was made at last. Here, in this dear good woman, this loving friend, to whom from the very first she had been so strongly drawn, she had found that missing waif, her grandfather's child by his second marriage, for whom she had so earnestly sought. Sometimes of late she had reproached herself for having given up the quest, and had been considering how best to set fresh inquiries on foot. And now!—oh, it seemed too good to be true! and at present she must hide her joy, must say nothing, since so agitating a revelation might be more than her friend could bear. She slowly hung up the picture in its place and moved away to the window to try and collect herself a little before again meeting Miss Whitman's eye. But it was too late.

A weak, trembling voice called her back, saying plaintively—

“What is it, Edith? What does it all mean? I am sure you know who painted this; you know my father’s name. For God’s sake, hide nothing from me! This cruel secret has been the cross of my life.”

Edith put her arms tenderly round her and made one more effort to calm her. “It is a long story, dear,” she whispered; “you are too ill to hear it now. I will tell you all I know directly you are a little better.”

But Miss Whitman was in a fever of excitement. “Whatever it is, tell me now, tell me all, Edith. You cannot know what I have suffered, feeling that I belonged to no one; had no right even to the name I bore.”

“Then be calm, darling,” replied Edith, in a low tremulous voice. “I can tell you your father’s name; it is the same as mine. James Daunt, of Parkston Manor, was your father and my grandfather, for your mother was his second wife. You, my best-loved friend, are the very relative I came to Italy to seek. Now kiss your niece, dear aunt,

and try to rest, or the doctor will send me away and insist on your having a better nurse."

Sweet tears of thankfulness were pouring down the authoress's pale cheeks. "Now I can rest indeed, dear child," she said, straining Edith to her. "To think that now, for the first time since I was a tiny child, I touch a hand in which I know that there runs the same blood as in my own! Ah, God is good. I may rest, indeed, now; my niece will take care of me."

Alarmed at her dear patient's depth of emotion, Edith tried to give a playful turn to the scene. "You will make me jealous of this new niece, dear," she said, trying to laugh. "Don't you think that your old friend, Edith Henderson, would take just as much care of you?"

Miss Whitman's face lighted up, and she gave one of her bright little nods. "You must forgive a little nonsense, Edith, when you have just made me so very, very happy. I'll be good and quiet now."

And closing her eyes, she presently sank into a quiet doze—her first real rest from pain since the attack began.



She had not been long asleep when the Italian maid came to the door with a troubled face, and told Edith, in a noisy whisper, that Signor Porta was in the drawing-room ; that he had insisted on entering on hearing of Miss Whitman's illness, and that he refused to go away before hearing from Edith's own lips how the *padrona* really was.

Edith found the artist striding up and down in a very excited state.

"Is it really so?" he cried, rushing up to Edith as she softly entered the room. "Is the dear signora really so very ill? Why didn't you send for me? She saved my sister you know, and I would give my life to save hers. You must let me help you."

Edith rapidly told him the state of the case, not a little touched and surprised by the emotion he displayed.

"Pray don't send me away," he cried; "I will stop here, like this dog, lying before her door. Let me stay at least till the doctor comes again. There may be something I could do for you, something I could get for our dear signora in Florence. And you look so white yourself, *poverina*; how can you

be fit to bear all this alone?" he added, looking pityingly at his ex-pupil.

And, indeed, the discovery Edith had just made had unhinged her almost more than all that had gone before. She was too weak from her own illness and trouble to bear easily any kind of shock. She could hardly command her voice enough to thank Porta for his sympathy.

The artist felt that this was no moment to mention the errand that had brought him to the villa, nevertheless he could not help saying—"There is another person who will be sadly grieved at the signora's illness—a friend who is most anxious to see you both, and has been hunting for you all over the Tyrol for the past month."

Edith's heart gave a great leap—she was easily fluttered now; a hot flush mounted to the roots of her hair. She turned abruptly aside, and, begging Porta to excuse her, hurried back to her friend's room.

Miss Whitman still slept, so Edith had leisure to ponder over Porta's words. "Hunting for them all over the Tyrol!" What could that mean? For the first time she repented having returned

Bethune's letters unread. What if he had not been to England after all! A sudden flame of hope arose in her heart at the thought. How she longed to interrogate Porta; and yet, no! womanly pride rendered that impossible.

And now her dear aunt was seized with a severer attack than before. Soon the doctor came, and Edith could think of nothing but the present anxiety. During the long hours of that terrible night, Life and Death were struggling for mastery over the gentle sufferer, who, even in her greatest pain, thought more of others than herself, and kept praying Edith to leave her and take some rest.

At last, when a new sun was already high and the morning carols of the birds had subsided into twittering wood-notes, a favourable crisis came—the inflammation was subdued, the patient slept. Worn out by her long watch, Edith noiselessly stole from the sick-room, and went into the garden to seek refreshment in the cool autumn air. To her surprise she found Porta slowly pacing up and down the gravel walk under the trees. In answer to her questions, he told her that he had been all night at the villa.

"Did you think," he said, "that I could go home and rest quietly when the dear signora was in such deadly peril! The doctor authorized me to stay when he was compelled to go away, and I was to have gone to fetch him had there come a change for the worse. Now that I know she is so much better, I will leave you. Your good *medico* will be here soon, and I will come back later in the day."

"You kind good man, you are a friend indeed," said Edith warmly. "Miss Whitman will thank you herself as soon as she is able to see you. Now I believe that all danger is really over." Then quickly gathering some of the finest of the glowing roses, as yet untouched by frost, she continued, "Will you take these to your sister? I am sure she loves flowers."

Porta's face beamed with one of his sunniest smiles. The smallest act of kindness to his sister always went straight to his heart.

"You are very good," he said simply; "but,"—and he detached a perfect bud from the fragrant cluster—"will you not let me give this to some one else? One little flower from you would make Signor Filippo very happy."

Edith's face changed; she snatched back the rose in a sudden gust of anger. "Certainly not," she cried. "What right have you to speak to me of—of Mr. Bethune? I have nothing to do with him."

Porta was amazed at her vehemence, but he admired its effect, and instantly took a mental note of her indignant attitude for the purposes of his art. He would have liked to sketch her on the spot.

Edith made a valiant effort at self-control. "Forgive my rudeness," she said gently, "but you don't know, you can't imagine." To explain was impossible; so, moving to a distant rosebush, she said pleasantly, "Here are some lovely white roses, the very last. Your sister must have these also."

But when Porta had something to say he was not easily prevented from saying it.

"Perhaps I do know, know everything," he said significantly, walking up to her and taking the offered roses,—“everything, excepting why you never answered a certain letter Signor Bethune sent you from Cortina.”

Edith turned full upon him; she was at bay now. Her face was as colourless as the roses she had just gathered, but she looked at him with calm, proud eyes, and answered slowly and distinctly—

“Mr. Bethune sent me no letter from Cortina. Another person wrote to tell me that he was starting for England.”


“‘Another person,’ you say; then that explains everything;” exclaimed the artist triumphantly. “Tell me, signora, don’t you remember the warning that I once gave you about Mrs. Trevelyan? Can’t you understand that this letter was a last effort of her spite?”

Edith looked at him for a moment with astonished bewilderment. All the pride vanished from her face, and two great tears rolled slowly down her pale cheeks. “God knows,” she said piteously; “you may be right; but pray, pray go away now!”

And, hastily wringing the artist’s hand, she fairly ran away into the house.

Porta looked after her with a puzzled smile. “Queer beings these Englishwomen,” he said to

himself. "All iced over with timid propriety, till suddenly a fierce little flame spurts up, the ice vanishes, and *presto* the real woman appears." Then ramming his hat low down over his brows, as though fearing his bushy hair would lift it from his head, he slowly walked down the hill to the city gate, occasionally sniffing his roses with an air of great contentment. "My friend shall have one of these after all," he murmured as he turned into the Piazza S. Spirito; "the poor fellow must be wild with anxiety."



## CHAPTER XII.

"There is a great deal of unmapped country within us, which would have to be taken into account in an explanation of our gusts and storms."—GEORGE ELIOT.

ANXIETY is a bald designation for the torment Bethune endured during the night of Miss Whitman's illness. Porta's non-appearance was incomprehensible to him; it was another mystery added to the greater one. Thrice during the evening he returned to the artist's house. The old woman-of-all-work, who answered the door, became quite testy at our hero's repeated visits. "How was she to know where her master was? Ten to one he had let himself in and let himself out again when she was out of the way." All she could say was that he was not in the house then. So she grumbled, but on finding a five-franc note resting in her wrinkled palm, she added in a softer



key, "Yes, signore, I'll certainly tell him that you want to see him, directly he comes in. Don't you be afraid; I always keep my word, for I am a Lucchese woman."

And with what scanty comfort he could derive from the probity of the people of Lucca, our troubled hero was fain to be content.

He could not bear to think what Porta's failure in his promise might imply. Surely good news would have travelled quicker! It was useless to go to bed; no rest would come to him, and to seek it would make him a helpless prey to a thousand more despairing doubts. Summoning all his self-control, he tried the great remedy—work, and passed the dark hours writing an article on the Orvieto frescoes, which, on its appearance some months later in a prominent art journal, was pronounced one of the most brilliant things he had ever written.

And though certainly the author derived no pleasure from the brilliancy of his own composition while writing it, he gained the negative benefit of tiring himself so thoroughly that he dropped asleep in his arm-chair the instant he threw aside his pen

He was barely dressed the next morning when Porta burst unceremoniously into the room, his coat flaps flying, his cravat awry, his hair in wildest disorder. Before Bethune had time to speak, the artist rushed towards him, and embraced him affectionately, exclaiming—

“I know what you would say, my friend: you would say that an Italian never keeps his word; that I failed to keep mine last night. Listen, and then judge.”

Thereupon he quickly related all about Miss Whitman's sudden illness and Edith's anxiety. He concluded by saying—

“It was no time, you see, my friend, to speak of your mission!”

“No! of course not,” sighed Bethune with depressed resignation. “I must wait for the present.” And then he reflected with keen remorse that while he had been occupied with personal feelings, the woman he loved had gone through dire anxiety, his kind old friend had been near to death. His own sufferings dwindled to mere selfishness compared with these stern realities. “Poor dear Miss Whitman!” he said; “although

she rejects my friendship, she cannot prevent me from going to inquire about her health. Any stranger might do that. Some other time, perhaps, you may have a chance of speaking to Mrs. Henderson."

A mischievous twinkle appeared in Porta's eyes. "I saw the bella signora in the garden this morning, less than an hour ago," he said meaningly. "All danger was over then, she was relieved, and she gave me these roses for my sister. They are very sweet, aren't they?" he continued, thrusting the odororous bunch close to Bethune's nostrils.

The Englishman buried his face in the flowers, and eagerly inhaled their perfume. In imagination he saw Edith among the rose bowers of the Bellosguardo garden. And Porta had actually seen her thus! For one moment he felt savagely envious of his friend's good fortune.

The artist, who was watching him keenly and partly read his thoughts, answered the unspoken words.

"But what if I did say something about you, told of your anxiety, your despair? I could not go into details, but something I did say."

"Go on, go on; tell me how she took it, what she answered," demanded Bethune impetuously, as the artist paused.

"She did not want to listen to me, told me to go away, refused to send you a flower as a token of reconciliation; but being a woman, all that went for nothing, for her eloquent face was telling me a widely different tale. Her words were against you, her face for you; nay, more, no sooner had she refused you a flower than she burnt to send you one. Though her lips said that these white buds were for my sister, her eyes bade me give them to you. Take them."

And Porta, separating the white blossoms from the red, brusquely handed them to Bethune, who raised them to his lips.

"Understand me well, though," continued the artist, speaking with much emphasis. "The bella Inglese did not know herself what her eyes said, much less that I could read their language. Still, by this time I am sure she heartily regrets having so abruptly dismissed me, and will be more inclined to listen when later in the day I go back to inquire how our dear friend goes on. And now for my

really important news. My suspicions were right. Your letter from Cortina never reached its destination. All that Signor Edith received was a note from another person whose name you will guess. There ! ”

Bethune jumped up with an exclamation of rage.

“ You see,” Porta went on, “ her anger against you cannot last now that she knows that you did write, that your letter was stolen.”

Bethune was fidgeting about the room now. With the proverbial ingratitude of a lover, it seemed to him that Porta had now done enough in the matter. But he was honestly ashamed of the feeling, and grasping Porta’s hand with an energy that made the artist wince, he thanked him effusively.

“ You have given me new life,” he said. “ Now, I will go straight to Edith and pray for an interview.”

Porta gave a snort followed by a groan. “ Oh, the blind foolishness of men ! ” he cried, putting his hands on Bethune’s shoulders and pressing him down into a chair. “ When you paint a picture,

tell me, do you ever put on a second coat of colour before the first is dry? No! you say. Well, I have dashed in a coat of colour on the fair picture you hope to possess. *Let it dry!* Oh, I understand your impatient look! You think I am exceeding my rôle of ambassador! Never mind. Give my words time to sink in; give your signora time to reflect upon them. If you go there at once, you will spoil all. Miss Whitman's condition will be a good reason for refusing you admittance. Signora Edith is still indignant with you: sore hurts leave soreness behind. Give her time to become indignant with herself, to feel that she has been unjust to you." At last the voluble Italian stopped to draw breath, and fanned himself with his hat.

Bethune gave a short laugh of vexation. "It is easy to see that you have never been in love, Porta," he said impatiently.

"Thank Heaven, no!" replied the artist emphatically; "and therefore I am clear-sighted and qualified to give advice. Love is madness, my friend."

And with that Porta took his leave, refusing the



Englishman's tardy offers of refreshment, and adjuring him to be patient and hope for the best.

Directly his back was turned, Bethune put on his hat, and after walking vaguely about the streets for a while, found that his feet were obeying the impulse of his desire and carrying him in the direction of the Roman Gate. Soon he was striding up the hill at his best pace. He was stirred by a ridiculous and thoroughly unreasonable irritation against Porta and Porta's well-intentioned zeal. Surely an Englishman could manage his own affairs without the interference of any Italian? What could a man like Porta know about the matter? He would see Edith at once; learn his fate from her lips without delay. But as he neared the villa his resolution flagged. Another repulse would be unbearable. He seemed to hear Ansano's voice telling him again that Mrs. Henderson was not at home. So he wandered about the olive slopes for a long time, and then, turning down a lane behind the villa, perched himself on a wall near that Montauto tower immortalized in the pages of Hawthorne's "Transformation." From this point he could see part of the villa

garden, and had Edith's figure been visible then, he could not have refrained from seeking admittance.

But the garden was empty of all but its trees and flowers, and Bethune soon left his post. As he again passed the great archway of the villa, he saw old Ansano and the dogs sunning themselves on the stone bench outside. Bethune stopped and asked for news of Miss Whitman. She was better, so much better, that the doctor said that she would be about again in a few days. Then the man, who had a friendly feeling for Bethune, not a little augmented by the frequency of that gentleman's gifts, launched into a circumstantial account of the *padrona's* sudden illness.

"Perhaps Signora Edith could receive you to-day, sir; shall I go and see?" he asked in conclusion.

Bethune hesitated; the temptation was mighty. He stooped down and caressed one of the dogs who was confidingly thrusting his nose into his hand.

"No—o! not to-day," he said, hastily clutching at his resolution before it escaped. "I only called for news of your *padrona*."



And once more bestowing a pat on the friendly terrier—Edith's favourite amongst her hostess's many animals—he hurriedly walked away across the piazza. Had he known that Edith's eyes were watching him through the big, barred window of the only one of Miss Whitman's rooms that looked upon the road, he certainly would not have had the strength to go away! Some subtle instinct had drawn our heroine to the window while Bethune was speaking with Ansano.

Of course, she thought, he would ask admittance. How sadly changed and worn he looked! Should she, could she see him? And while thus debating the point, she was all the time aware that it would be impossible to say "No," if asked to receive him.

So it gave her a sharp pang of disappointment to see him turn away towards the city. Her heart prompted her to open the window and call him in. Her hand was already on the fastening, when pride stopped the movement. "He has never even looked towards the window," she exclaimed tearfully. "My hard injustice has driven him away for ever. He will never, never come again." She

went back to her aunt's bedside looking so pale and dejected that the invalid's alarm was aroused. But Edith would not intrude this personal grief on the new-found happiness of this dearest friend and relation, and avoided all mention of Bethune. Pallid looks were easily attributed to the past night's sleeplessness and anxiety.

Miss Whitman's inflammatory attack had passed away as suddenly as it came, to the glad astonishment of the good doctor, who had anticipated a long illness, such as she had gone through some years before. His astonishment increased when informed of Edith's great discovery.

"See now what it is to have a prodigiously elastic mind!" he exclaimed. "A shock that would have killed some women has cured our dear friend. I verily believe nothing will kill her so long as she has a mind to live."

And the Lady of Bellosguardo, serenely happy though very weak, rested cosily among her pillows, petting her Persian cat and revolving certain designs with regard to Edith.

The rupture with Bethune troubled her greatly, and the more she thought of it the more she felt

convinced that that gentleman's return to Florence disproved all that she and Edith had believed about him. She would have regained her strength in a day or so, and then she determined that she would send for him and learn the whole truth. For the moment silence was, perhaps, best.

Meanwhile our hero was wandering about in the neighbourhood of Bellosguardo. He could not make up his mind to go down into the noisy city : some magic charm detained him on the hill. The pleasant fields, the sunny vineyards, at least spoke to him of peace, although he had it not. Hope stirred within him in that breezy autumn air, while his eyes roamed over the fair valley, and he listened to the songs of distant grape-pickers and the deep voices of the cathedral bells.


The afternoon was well advanced before he made his way back to the high road, and resting on a wall, feasted his eyes on the rich harmony of Giotto's Campanile, recalling Edith's frequent raptures about that peerless tower of which the varied tints epitomize the general colouring of the valley of the Arno and the city in its midst.

Suddenly he heard his name shouted in angry accents, and he saw Porta jump out of a cab that was coming down the hill, and run towards him shaking his fist wildly.

"You have been to the villa, you perfidious Englishman! You have been sent away, and now you have spoilt your last chance. Serve you right! You asked my counsel, and then you go and do the very thing which you ought not to have done! I wash my hands of you! I give you up! There!"

And Porta, who had reached the foot of the wall, looked wrathfully up at his friend seated high above him.

The artist's disapproval was so comically expressed that Bethune, who was in better spirits now, most ungratefully burst into a loud laugh. But he repented immediately, and swinging himself down to Porta's side, he put his hand upon his shoulder, and said, "Spare your southern vehemence, you kind-hearted fellow; for indeed I don't deserve it." Then he explained how he had only lingered near the gates of Paradise, without attempting to enter therein.



Porta drew a long breath of relief. "I am glad," he said. "I thought you had broken your word. But I trust that no one besides Ansano saw you! Now listen: I have great news. You know already that the dear signora is almost well to-day. I have seen her for a few moments, and you would never guess the grand discovery that has been made."

Then he told Bethune all that the reader already knows, and spoke of Miss Whitman's and Edith's joy. After the first few moments, Bethune's friendly interest in the news became obscured by selfish considerations. Lovers are necessarily selfish. Is not love itself an *égoïsme à deux*, as the Frenchman puts it?

Might not this new position of things increase the difficulty of winning Edith?

"Of course you did not mention me?" he asked gloomily, after a short pause.

"Certainly not!" replied Porta promptly. "I did not intend to mention you. Let the colour dry. In fact, I hastened to take leave when I thought I perceived that one of the ladies was trying to bring your name in. It

would have been wrong to tire an invalid by too long a visit."

"Oh, certainly," said Bethune, knocking a chip out of the wall; and then, at Porta's invitation, he drove back with him to town.

## CHAPTER XIII.

"Mio caro amore,  
Chi detto t' ha che non ti voglio bene?  
Chi te t' ha data questa pena al cuore?"  
STORNELLO TOSCANO.

"Earth's noblest thing, a woman perfected."  
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

THREE more days passed away—heavy, endless days to Bethune; little shorter to our Edith. Miss Whitman was nearly well by that time; able to sit out in her sunny garden among the flowers. But for the great discovery, she would have already become impatient of rest and longing to return to her usual labours. As it was, she was content to spend the tranquil hours listening to Edith's account of the events that had led to her fruitless Roman search, looking at the miniatures found in the Parkston library, and reading the old letters telling of Mr. Daunt's


Italian love dream and its miserable ending. Now, at last, Edith learnt the history of the early life of the bright-eyed baby girl whose pictured features had roused her from her apathy and drawn her away from England. Miss Whitman—for so we will still call her—told her of the strange, wandering life she had led with a mother who alternately petted and ill-treated her according to her humour and that of a man who went with them everywhere. How, at last, after a fierce quarrel with this man, her mother and he both disappeared suddenly one night, leaving her, a tiny child of ten, to bear the threats and abuse of the defrauded landlord of the inn in which she had been abandoned. She told how an old English lady, staying in the house, had taken pity on the forsaken child and placed her in a convent school at her own expense. There she had passed several years; not positively unhappy ones, but darkened by a sense of disgrace connected with her mother that grew with her growth. She was always made to feel that some unknown blight stamped her as different from her school-mates. Innumerable slights were thrust upon her;



and when, in the bitterness of her indignation, she would demand to know what she had done to merit this treatment, she was always reminded of her nameless position, and bade to comport herself with due humility. But at last her benefactress, Mrs. Whitman, returned to Italy, sought out her *protégée*, and, pleased with her ready intelligence, took her to England with her, adopted her as a daughter, completed her education, and helped her to cut herself a path in the grand, hero-peopled world of imaginative literature. She told Edith of her grief in losing this kind friend; how at the age of twenty-two she had found herself quite alone in the world, and obliged to eke out, by her pen, the scanty pittance which was all that Mrs. Whitman could leave her at her death. She also confided to her niece's safe keeping the heart-sorrow that had been the heaviest trouble of her life. How, in the fulness of her youth, when, after many hardships, she had fought her way to comparative competence and fame, she had loved and believed herself loved in return. How the man's love had proved too feeble to stand the test of learning

that she, Agnes Whitman, had no right to the name she bore, knew neither who nor what she was, and how he had coldly left her for ever. And she told of the long battle she had fought with despair, and all that it had cost her to work through pain to peace, and learn to find her own happiness in promoting that of others.

And Edith listened, and loved, and admired, and all the more strove to hush the cry of her own suffering heart. For, with the close reserve natural to sensitive women when instinct warns them that some crisis is at hand, our heroine had never yet spoken to her aunt of what she had learnt from Porta respecting Bethune. She waited for a favourable opportunity, and so far no opportunity had arrived. Often she reproached herself for feeling so sad in the midst of the joy of possessing in her beloved friend the relative for whom she had sought as a matter of duty. Already a long letter was on its way to England, informing Mrs. Mortimer, with gentle triumph, of the unexpected discovery. Also, she had written to her lawyer, instructing him to draw up an act of donation, settling a large sum of money



on her new-found aunt. On this point, too, she kept silence; rightly judging that it would be less difficult to vanquish Miss Whitman's resistance when all should be in a proper legal form.

How happy she ought to be, she told herself repeatedly, now, that in fulfilling her great desire to do justice to her grandfather's child, she would free her dearest friend from all material cares!

And yet her cheeks remained pale, her movements languid; the slightest unexpected sound threw her into a tremor of agitation. But this state of things would pass, she told herself, as in time all things did pass; and meanwhile she would crush down all selfish, merely personal desires. Doubtless everything was for the best, and the truest philosophy consisted in taking everything as it came, without fruitlessly endeavouring to mould one's own destiny.

All this, and much more to the same effect, she told herself perpetually, and yet, Philip Bethune was never out of her thoughts. In these last few days her love had burnt its way through all doubt, all suspicion; its flame soared higher and clearer than before. Porta's words had had their effect;

the *colour had dried*. Of course it had been Mrs. Trevelyan who had worked all the evil; and in an agony of humiliation poor Edith hated herself for having ever suspected Philip Bethune of the insult she had ascribed to him.

Yet she would not have raised a finger to call him to her, for she could not believe that he desired her love. "He might, perhaps, have loved me," she would sigh to herself; "but, of course, it is too late now; he will never come near me again." And it was, she persuaded herself, this conviction of the utter hopelessness of it all, that prevented her from confiding her tumult of feelings to her dearest friend and sympathizer. "Why spoil her happiness with my grief? Better wear through it in silence!"

But as one day followed the other (and now three endless days had passed), without Bethune coming again to Bellosguardo, poor Edith felt as though she had lived through ages of misery. A restless wish seized her to leave Florence for ever, and she proposed to her aunt that they should go together to England and make it their home.

But Miss Whitman's keen vision penetrated all



that Edith believed to be so well concealed; and kissing her affectionately, she replied that there was plenty of time to discuss their future projects; that she would never allow Edith to sacrifice her youth to her own old age, and that she much doubted whether she were not already too old to begin a new life away from Italy.

"I love England dearly in the abstract," she would say, "but in the concrete I prefer the valley of the Arno. What should I do without my mountains, my river, my towers, without all the loveliness that is here daily food for my eyes? Then life is so stiff there. For instance, no one would drop in unceremoniously, to scold me about my false views of art. I should miss that excitement also."

This she said with a laughing glance at Porta, who still found time every day to come and assure himself of his "good angel's" convalescence, and plunge into the old arguments on the bearings of art and literature.

True to his system of tactics, the artist avoided all mention of Bethune; Miss Whitman, being ignorant of the former's ambassadorial functions,

was equally silent respecting him; and poor Edith, who would have given worlds to question Porta, found it quite impossible to begin. Those interminable art-discussions left no room for that pliable general conversation which can so easily be twisted in the direction of any particular topic.

But meanwhile, Miss Whitman was quietly maturing her own plans, and was resolved to learn from Bethune's own lips all that had happened in Cortina; the secret of that abominable note with which, she felt sure now, that he could have had nothing to do. Her relationship gave her a right now to interfere in Edith's behalf, and she meant to exercise that right. Accordingly, the first morning that she felt strong enough for what might probably be a trying interview, she despatched a friendly little note to Bethune, begging him to come and see her that afternoon, and hinting that her curt note of dismissal had been written under a misapprehension which after-reflection had almost entirely dispelled.

The next thing to be done was to get her companion out of the way without telling her the

reason why. This was more difficult, for Edith did not consider the time come to give up her rôle of nurse. The weather was chilly now—so chilly, that the gay flower-beds outside, well out of reach of the north wind, looked like a dream of summer in the midst of winter, and the ladies had passed the morning by the fireside, alternately chatting and reading.

“I have been thinking, dear,” said the authoress suddenly, after one or two attempts to induce Edith to walk into Florence,—“I have been thinking, dear, that you really ought to go back to your painting now. This tiresome attack of mine has prevented you from even peeping into your studio since we came back. Why don’t you make a beginning to-day?”

Edith protested that she felt no inclination for work; that the great discovery had dethroned all her art aspirations.


Miss Whitman shook her head at this. “That will never do,” she said. “The new relation in which we stand to each other must not have so demoralizing an effect. To tell you the truth, I felt so sure that you would want to paint to-day,

that I sent Ansano early this morning to light the studio fire and put everything in order for you."

Edith gave a slight shudder. "I don't think I ever want to go into that studio again," she replied in a low voice, bending over the fire to re-arrange a falling log; and then she added that she was afraid to go away lest her friend should do something imprudent, and over-try her returning strength. The authoress glanced at the clock and became desperate. Time was running on; in a few minutes Bethune might appear. So, hiding her impatience as well as she could, with gentle obstinacy she proceeded to combat all Edith's objections.

She longed to say openly that she expected Philip Bethune, and wished to see him alone, but reason whispered that silence was best till the important interview was over and she knew exactly how matters stood.

So, with another furtive glance at the clock, she said, "Now, Edith, you must give me the privileges of an invalid, and let me be despotic for once in a way. I have an important business






letter to think over, and indeed, indeed the kindest thing you can do for me will be to leave me all by myself for an hour or so. Besides, though you don't think it, I know that it will do you good to return to your work. Do go, darling!"

"Oh, if you want to get rid of me, I will certainly go," answered Edith, jumping up with a shade of pique in her voice, and hoping all the time to be told to stay. But the Lady of Bellosguardo only smiled enigmatically as she gave her a farewell kiss; and Edith, reluctantly enough, collected her painting materials and left her alone.

The benevolent conspirator breathed freely at last when the door closed behind her unsuspecting niece. She seated herself at her writing-table, rested her head on her wee, brown hand, and began thinking over the coming interview with Bethune—novelist-like—arranging in her own mind the very best way of expressing the many things that she wished to say to him.

Meanwhile, poor Edith, feeling lonelier and sadder than ever, slowly crossed the Piazza and entered the ilex avenue. It was very cold under



the dark trees, a keen north wind whistled mournfully through the branches. She shivered as she walked along and thought of that fair summer evening when Bethune had come to say good-bye before going to England. Ah! how long, long ago that seemed! what a tremendous change had come over her life since then! Where now was the peace which then she had believed hers? Why had she not had the courage to live for art alone, and thus avoid the storm which now was crushing her to the earth? How, too, could she bear to face the memories that haunted her deserted studio? It was cruel of her aunt to have sent her there!

She had reached the door now, and inserting her big key in the lock, she tried to turn it. But either her recent illness had weakened her wrist, or the key greatly needed oiling, for it resisted all her efforts to turn it, and remained immovable. It was very provoking. Throwing her paint-box on the ground, she now applied both hands to the task, and was exerting all her strength when, suddenly, another hand—one she would have recognized among a thousand—lay upon her own, and close

to her ear Bethune's voice said, "Let me see if I can open it for you."

Breathless from her exertions—or from what you will—Edith let go the key and turned a white quivering face towards another no less agitated than her own.

One long intense look and all seemed explained—all forgiven. Bethune silently turned the key, held open the door, and Edith stepped into the clean-swept studio like one walking in a dream. She was so completely taken by surprise, that no thought of opposition occurred to her.

All necessity for conventional forms of behaviour seemed swept away, as by some huge tidal wave. She just sank down into the nearest chair, threw aside her hat, and pressed her hands over her eyes as though asking herself whether she were awake or dreaming. Bethune was the first to break silence. Taking her disengaged hand in both his own he bent down, kissed it, and asked in a very low voice—

"Why have you been so cruel to me? Why did you refuse to see me, to read my letters? Tell me, will you forgive me now?"

For a few moments Edith made no answer. In the strange, happy bewilderment caused by his unexpected appearance, it seemed like a dream that she should have ever doubted him. The last miserable weeks were suddenly as though they had never been ; surely it was but yesterday that he and she had stood together on the rock at Peutelstein ?

“ Will you forgive me, Edith ? ” he repeated in trembling anxiety.

Her eyes met his yearningly fixed upon her face. She just murmured, “ Yes, Philip,” and then—her head sank upon his shoulder, his arms held her in a close embrace. That was all the explanation that passed between them at first. Many minutes passed before Edith raised her head from its resting-place, and wiping away her tears, said, with a tender smile—

“ After all, Mr. Bethune, you have never told me what that question was to which you wanted an answer ? ”

And Bethune, man-like, replied, “ I won’t tell you, Mrs. Henderson, until you call me Philip again.”

Neither question nor answer took long in the telling, yet the old story has so many variations, that it is no wonder if nearly two hours slipped away before these two had half exhausted the theme or expressed a hundredth part of what they had in their hearts.

"You must have known how I loved you, darling — loved you with all my heart and soul!"

"How could I know it, when you never told me?" she protested, woman-like. "And then, was not that note from Cortina" (she would not desecrate this holy hour by uttering Mrs. Trevelyan's name), "was not that not enough to kill all belief in you?"

Bethune knit his brows sternly. "To think that my darling should have received so vile an insult!" he exclaimed. "You must give me that note, Edith, if you have it still."

"No, dear!" she answered gently; "rather let me burn it—we need no revenge."

\* \* \* \* \*

By this time Miss Whitman was pacing up and


down her dining-room in a state of vehement impatience.

"This is too provoking!" she exclaimed. "He cannot have received my note. Perhaps he has even left Florence! And I had planned it all so nicely! We would have had a thorough explanation, and then, when all was clear—and I am sure that all would have been clear—I should have sent him across to the studio to make his peace with Edith. Now it is too late. Even if he comes, Edith will be here, her pride will take alarm, she will refuse to listen to anything, and everything will be worse than before!"

"Ansano! Ansano!" she cried, putting her head in at the kitchen door, and being almost knocked down by the joyful outward rush of three imprisoned dogs, "are you sure that Mr. Bethune said he was coming here to-day?"

"At two o'clock precisely, signora," replied Ansano's voice from the back regions.

And now it was nearly four o'clock. It was clear that no Bethune was to be expected that day. Miss Whitman resolved to go and see how poor lonely Edith was getting on with her work. So,



calling all her dogs, and giving a farewell pat to the Persian cat, who was far too sleepy to move or lift more than one eyelid in answer to her mistress's caress, Miss Whitman slowly crossed the Piazza in the direction of the studio. She lingered for a few moments outside the gate, and looked down the road towards Florence. Alas! no human being was in sight.

But as she entered the avenue, a gentleman and lady who were coming down it, linked arm in arm, hurried forward as they caught sight of her.

"Oh, dear Miss Whitman!" cried Bethune, "will you forgive me for breaking my appointment with you?"

Miss Whitman looked from one to the other, flashes of gladness playing round her mouth, heart-felt joy beaming from her eyes. She gave one of her bright little nods. "How can I refuse it," she said, "since Edith has forgiven a similar offence? If you only knew how I have been raging at you all the afternoon! Now tell me quickly all about it."

"First of all, then," said Bethune, drawing her arm within his, while Edith clung lovingly to her

on the other side, "you have a nephew as well as a niece now; and as we mean to take our dear little aunt safe and sound to England with us, she must not stay out another instant in this cold north wind."

THE END.

---

PRINTED AT THE CAXTON PRESS, BECCLES.





## MACMILLAN & CO.'S POPULAR NOVELS.

*In crown 8vo, cloth, price 6s. each volume.*

**BY WILLIAM BLACK.**

A PRINCESS OF THULE. Tenth Edition.  
THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A PHAETON.  
Eleventh Edition. Illustrated.  
THE MAID OF KILLERNA; and other Tales.

**BY THE REV. CHARLES KINGSLEY.**

WESTWARD HO!  
TWO YEARS AGO.  
HYPATIA.  
HEREWARD THE WAKE.  
YEAST.  
ALTON LOCKE. With Portrait.

**BY CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.**

THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE. With Illustrations.  
HEARTSEASE. With Illustrations.  
THE DAISY CHAIN. With Illustrations.  
THE TRIAL: More Links of the Daisy Chain. With Illustrations.  
HOPES AND FEARS.  
DYNEVOR TERRACE.  
THE PILLARS OF THE HOUSE. 2 vols.  
CLEVER WOMAN OF THE FAMILY.  
THE YOUNG STEPMOTHER.  
THE DOVE IN THE EAGLE'S NEST.  
THE CAGED LION. Illustrated.  
THE CHAPLET OF PEARLS.  
LADY HESTER; or, Ursula's Narrative.

**BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."**

THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY. Illustrated.  
THE OGILVIES. Illustrated.  
AGATHA'S HUSBAND. Illustrated.  
OLIVE. Illustrated.

*Macmillan & Co.'s Popular Novels—continued.*

---

**BY THOMAS HUGHES, Q.C.**

**TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL-DAYS.** Illustrated.

**TOM BROWN AT OXFORD.** Illustrated.

**BY ANNIE KEARY.**

**CASTLE DALY.**

**OLDBURY.**

**A YORK AND A LANCASTER ROSE.**

---

**ESTELLE RUSSELL.**

**THE STORY OF PAULINE.** By G. C. CLUNES.

**PATTY.** By Mrs. MACQUOID.

**A SLIP IN THE FENS.** Illustrated.

**MY TIME, AND WHAT I'VE DONE WITH IT.** By  
F. C. BURNAND.

**UNDER THE LIMES.**

**CHRISTINA NORTH.** By E. M. ARCHER.

**OWEN GWYNNE'S GREAT WORK.** By Lady AUGUSTA NOEL.

**RALPH AND BRUNO.** By M. E. BRAMSTONE.

**HUGH CRICHTON'S ROMANCE.** By CHRISTABEL R. COLERIDGE.

---

**RECENT NOVELS.**

**MADCAP VIOLET.** By WILLIAM BLACK. 3 vols. Crown 8vo,  
31s. 6d. Fourth Edition.

**KISMET.** A Nile Novel. By GEORGE FLEMING. 2 vols. Crown  
8vo, 21s.

**MY YOUNG ALCIDES:** a Faded Photograph. By CHARLOTTE  
M. YONGE, Author of "The Heir of Redclyffe." 2 vols. Crown  
8vo, 12s.

**THE THREE BRIDES.** By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE. 2 vols.  
Crown 8vo, 12s.

**A YORK AND A LANCASTER ROSE.** By ANNIE KEARY,  
Author of "Castle Daly," etc. Crown 8vo, 6s.

**ROSE TURQUAND.** By ELLICE HOPKINS. 2 vols. Crown  
8vo, 21s.

---

**MACMILLAN & Co., LONDON.**



